

**PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY**

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Famous women of the Old Testament. :
A series of popular lectures delivered in
the First Baptist church, Montgomery, Ala.

FAMOUS WOMEN OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A SERIES OF

*POPULAR LECTURES DELIVERED IN THE FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY, ALA.*

BY

MORTON BRYAN WHARTON, D.D., PASTOR,
Late United States Consul to Germany.

AUTHOR OF "EUROPEAN NOTES; OR, WHAT I SAW IN
THE OLD WORLD."

"Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth
the Lord she shall be praised."

Solomon.

**PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY**

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Dedication.

TO

THE BAPTIST CHURCH, BRISTOL, TENN.,
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, EUFAULA, ALA.,
THE WALNUT STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.,
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, AUGUSTA, GA., AND
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY, ALA.

MY FIVE PASTORATES;

ESPECIALLY TO THE NOBLE WOMEN OF THOSE CONGREGATIONS, WHO
EVER PROVED MY

“FELLOW-HELPERS TO THE TRUTH,”

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following lectures were prepared hurriedly in the midst of arduous pastoral duties, and delivered with no view to their publication in a permanent form. They were heard by very large crowds, who gave expressions of approval and delight which were unanticipated; and they are published in response to requests from the press, and individuals whose judgment I was compelled to respect. That they could be greatly improved by revision, pruning, recasting and critical correction goes without saying; but they are given to the reader just as they were delivered to the hearer. If they shall affect the former as I have been assured they did the latter, in awakening an admiration for the noble women of the sacred past, and creating a thirst for the study of the Old Testament Scriptures, I shall be only too glad that my feeble words, like those of Goldsmith's village preacher, "prevailed with double sway."

M. B. WHARTON.

MONTGOMERY, ALA.,



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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
EVE—		
The Mother of the Human Family		15
SARAH—		
The Mother of the Faithful in all Ages		31
REBEKAH—		
The Beautiful but Deceptive Wife		47
RACHEL—		
The Lovely Wife of Jacob		67
MIRIAM—		
The Grand, Patriotic Old Maid		83
RUTH—		
The Young Widow of Moab		103
DEBORAH—		
The Strong-Minded Woman		123
JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER —		
The Consecrated Maiden		141
DELILAH—		
The False Wife of Samson		159
THE WITCH OF ENDOR—		
The Enchantress of the Ghost of Samuel. .		177

	PAGE
HANNAH—	
The Mother of Samuel	201
ABIGAIL—	
The Wife of David	219
THE QUEEN OF SHEBA—	
Solomon's Royal Guest	241
JEZEBEL—	
The Heathen Queen of an Israelitish King	259
THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM—	
The Hospital Matron	277
ESTHER—	
The Israelitish Queen of a Heathen King	303



PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

Famous Women of the Old Testament.

LECTURE I.

EVE, THE MOTHER OF THE HUMAN FAMILY.

WOMAN is an important subject of discussion viewed in any light, for she is the most potent factor in the being and the well being of the human family. But it is when we view her on the field of sacred history that she appears in her truest character. Though separated by thousands of years from the period when she moved on the stage, yet the pen of inspiration has so delineated her character that we can behold her in her several rôles of maiden, wife, mother, prophetess, ruler, with all the distinctness, interest and freshness as if she stood before us a real, living presence. From the beautiful and virtuous example of some, and the detested weaknesses of others, we cannot but derive lessons of wisdom. It shall be my purpose to discuss in an easy, popular way some, if not all, of the following characters: Eve, the Mother of the human family; Sarah, the mother of the faithful in every age; Rebekah, the beautiful but deceptive wife; Rachel, the wife of Jacob; Miriam, the

grand, patriotic, old maid; Ruth, the lovely, young and honored widow; Deborah, the strong-minded woman; Jephthah's Daughter, the consecrated maiden; Delilah, the fair but deceitful wife; the Witch of Endor, enchantress of Samuel's ghost; Hannah, the praying and devoted mother; Abigail, the wife of the Shepherd King; the Queen of Sheba, Solomon's royal guest; Jezebel, the Bloody Mary of Scripture; the woman of Shunem, Elisha's friend; Esther, the deliverer of her people.

I begin the series with Eve, with whom we all began life, according to the common idea, more than six thousand years ago. On meditating on her character as "the mother of mankind," I feel an interest in her which I never felt before. Mark Twain represents himself as weeping over the grave of his blood relative Adam, when he was in the Holy Land. Why should I not be affected in discoursing about our greatest grandmother Eve? The following questions will embrace what I have to say about her: Who was she? Where was her home? Why was she made? Why did she fail? What did she suffer? and lastly, What was her end? She was the most interesting woman ever in the world, because she was the first woman. Everybody with common-sense, it seems to me, must know that a first woman was necessary to the peopling of the world. The idea that woman could be evolved from a bit of protoplasm is the most absurd and ridiculous thing that could be imagined. There are millions of women in the world to-day. Each one had a mother, and that mother had a mother, and so on

with each until they are traced back to Eve, the fountain-head of them all, without whom Cleopatra had never reigned in Egypt, nor Mrs. Cleveland graced the "White House" of America. Abraham's seed was said to be as the stars for number, and as the sands upon the sea shore for multitude. Abraham's seed was only a small part of the seed of Eve. Abraham was the father of a nation; Eve was the mother of the nations. She also was the most beautiful of women. The Venus of Milo, in marble, or the Venus of Titian, in oil, can convey but a faint idea of what Eve was when she came from the creative hand of God. She had gone through none of the diseases of childhood, her cheeks were untanned by the sun, and unbleached by poisonous air.

"So lovely fair
That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now
Mean, or in her contained or in her looks;
Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love."

She has been well styled "Heaven's best, last gift." It has been remarked concerning divine providence that what was first in intention was last in execution. God designed the world for man, and after he had produced in order, first inanimate elements, and then vegetables, and then animals, man entered on the scene to be lord of all. Then came woman, sometimes at least to exercise her lordship over the man. Thus Eve came upon the stage; "the house being built, its inhabitant appeared; the feast being set forth,

the guest was introduced; the theatre being decorated and lighted up, the spectator was admitted to behold the splendid magnificent scenery in the heavens above and the earth beneath." But where was her home? Even Eve could lay claim to one spot as the dearest of earth to her. It was the garden of Eden, also called Paradise, from a Persian word that means a park or garden. There has always been a natural desire to know where this spot was located. Men have wanted to view the seat of that heaven on earth, where the earth brought forth its fruits and flowers spontaneously, where animals now vicious were as harmless as they were beautiful, where the air was redolent with perfumes that bore no poison on their breath—the one lone spot of earth which was the abode of perfect virtue and innocence. It has been variously located. There is hardly any part of the world in which it has not been sought. In Asia, in Europe, in Africa, in America, in Tartary, on the banks of the Ganges, in the Indies, in China, on the island of Ceylon, in Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Persia, Babylonia, Arabia, Palestine, Ethiopia, the mountains of the Moon and the Arctic regions. Some place it on the river produced by the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris; others place it in Armenia between the sources of the four rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Arvxis and Phasis. It is thought it must have been located in the midst of mountains because only such could supply the springs necessary to form the streams, and hence Dr. Smith, the highest authority, places the primeval seat on the highlands south of the Caucasus. Let us sup-

pose then that this was the spot, now withered and blighted it is true, which was first pressed by the delicate feet of Eve.

But now the great question arises, which has doubtless occurred to many an old bachelor, why was she made at all? I answer, she was made first for Adam's companionship. "God saw that it was not good for man to be alone;" the very beauties of Eden doubtless palled upon the tastes of Adam for lack of some one to enjoy them with him. This is true of us all. When we are away from our loved ones "the mid-summer sun shines but dim, and the fields strive in vain to look gay." Byron in his travels in Europe found his pleasure greatly diminished because his loved one was not there. He said:

"The castle's crag of Drachenfels,
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks that bear the vine,
And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strewed a scene which I should see
With double joy wert thou with me."

Thus it was with Adam.

"The world was sad, the garden was a wild,
And man the hermit sighed till woman smiled."

She was made as an object that he might love. Without "some one to love" even Eden would have been a wilderness. He was to love her not merely for

sensual but for high moral considerations; for beautiful as is the form of woman it does not equal her high moral nature. She was made to be his wife, and we have here the original constitution of that union which is the most delicate and important known to mortals. We see here that marriage is not merely union but it is unity; "they twain shall be one flesh." They must be composed of only two persons—we have here an argument against polygamy in all its forms. It must be based on love. A man or woman who marries for any other consideration is guilty of the height of folly. And it would seem from this that matches are made in heaven. It was certainly true in this case, and centuries after an inspired man said, "A good wife is from the Lord." Some may ask then, where is a bad one from? And for this cause a man should cut himself off from all others. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave only to his wife." When people get married, they should not remain with the parents of either side, but colonize. And a wise mother-in-law will generally make it lively for them until they do. More unhappiness has been caused by crowding families together than from almost any other source.

She was made to be his wife and the mother of his children. The command given was to "multiply and replenish the earth." The name Eve indicates her true character. It means "Life," or the giver of life, and Eve was destined to be the mother of all living. So the answer which the cynic gave is not true. He said she was "called" Eve to signify that "man's day

of happiness was drawing to a close." She was made to be "a helpmeet" for man. That one word "helpmeet," gives woman her true position in this world. It is only in countries where the Bible exists that she attains it. In other lands she is the toy, the play-thing, the servant, the slave of man, but religion places her by his side; his equal, his helper. Some one has said: "She was not taken from the head of man, lest she should rule over him; nor from his feet, lest he should trample upon her; but she was taken from his side that she might be his equal; from under his arm that he might protect her; from near his heart that he might cherish and love her." But there is often more sentiment than truth in this ingenious statement. Have none of you ever heard of a hen-pecked husband? Is not many a poor fellow afraid to say that his soul is his own in the presence of his wife? Whenever I am requested to marry a couple, the lady invariably tells me not to put "obey" in the obligation she is to take, for she just does not mean to do it.

"Ever since the world began
It has always been the way,
For did not Adam, the very first man,
The very first woman obey?"

It is equally true that man sometimes tramples woman under his feet. The whipping post is too good a place for such a man. "The man who lays his hand upon a woman, save in the way of kindness, is a wretch whom 'twere gross flattery to name a coward."

But the all-important question is why did woman sin? It was not because she was forced to do it, for God "left free the human will." It was not because she needed anything to make her happy, for she was the mistress of creation. I attribute her fall to two things: her curiosity and her ambition. She wondered why God should have placed one tree there whose fruit she could not taste, and she desired to be a wiser woman—a goddess. Hence she listened to the tempter (the first false step), who said: "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that on the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Listening was the first step, yielding was the second.

"She plucked, she ate,
Earth felt the wound and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost."

Some men, prominently Henry Ward Beecher, have ridiculed the idea that God would make such mighty results flow from the eating of an apple. But we must remember that obedience was the indispensable test of devotion to Him, and as they lived on fruits, to eat of forbidden fruit was about the only test he could make. She could not practice idolatry, or theft, or adultery, and being the representative head of the race she failed in the one great point of the law, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Not satisfied with sinning, she caused Adam to sin.

The Scriptures tell us that it was not Adam that was deceived, but the woman. That serpent never could have imposed on the good sense of Adam. It is supposed that he sinned purely because of his love of the woman, and he told the truth when he said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." He could give up Eden, but he could not give up his wife. There was something noble in that. The woman is admired who clings to her husband in all his wretchedness and disgrace, and the husband equally so, for

"What is love worth if 'tis not the same,
Through joy and through sorrow, through glory and shame?
I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in thy heart,
I know that I love thee whatever thou art."

Consider now what this woman suffered. Her eyes were opened, but it was first of all to be ashamed. But there was something worse than this. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This last I suppose hurt her worse than anything, but from that day to this, her husband has been given precedence over the wife in the matter of ruling. Another pang that she suffered was banishment from Eden. If anything crushes a woman it is to give up a beautiful home that she loves, to be thrust out on the world. We can imagine her as she took one last, lingering look on the bowers of Eden. We can almost hear her as she exclaims:

“Must I leave thee, Paradise ! Thus leave
The native soil, these happy walks and shades
Fit haunts for gods ! Where I had hoped to spend
Quiet though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both.”

But she had to go. “Some natural tears she dropped, but wiped them soon. The earth was all before her where to choose her place of rest, and Providence her guide.”

She suffered now all the sorrows and cares incident to motherhood. She had to mourn over a wayward, wicked son in her first born. And since that day how many wayward sons have first streaked their mother’s hair with gray, and then broken their hearts. Young men, if there are any of you leading dissipated lives, let me tell you, you are matricides, you are killing your mothers by lingering tortures. Abel was a good son, but he was not left long to bless her, for Cain slew him, presenting her in the dead boy the first appearances he ever had of death, and in the other son the first murderer that ever fled from justice. God comforted her in giving her Seth, a substitute, as the name implies, for the lost loved one.

In closing let us ask what became of Eve? She perhaps lived long and had many sons and daughters. She doubtless became a believer and was eventually saved, for no sooner had God’s law been violated than he provided a glorious remedy in the “seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head,” and when her summons came she doubtless regained the lost Eden. Not indeed that which was placed on the

Euphrates, but the paradise of God above, where flowers bloom perennially, where fruits never decay, where the trees of life are standing, where the rivers of life are flowing; where no tempter ever comes, and where sickness, sorrow, pain and death are felt and feared no more.



A decorative monogram for the name SARAH. The letter 'S' is the central element, intricately intertwined with a vine that winds around it, featuring small leaves and flowers. To the right of the 'S', the name 'SARAH' is written in a bold, serif font. The entire monogram is rendered in a dark, monochromatic color on a light, neutral background.

SARAH

LECTURE II.

SARAH, THE MOTHER OF THE FAITHFUL IN ALL AGES.

I PROPOSE to present you, as best I may, a word picture of a very interesting woman, Sarah, the wife of Abraham. If I were to ask those of you who have not carefully studied the subject for your conception of her character, you would, perhaps, tell me that she was a plain and saintly old lady of primitive manners, ignorant, and, considering her treatment of Hagar, possessing considerable temper, but after all, acting as a good wife to a good and great man. My picture shall be quite different from that. I represent her as one of the most beautiful women that ever lived. She was raised in Ur of the Chaldees, famous for its beautiful women. To this day the beautiful Circassian girls of the adjacent mountain region are sold in Constantinople, and it is said there are no cheeks so soft and creamy, no eyes so deep and lustrous as theirs, no forms so sylph-like and willowy. I verily believe that there is something in soil and climate that has as much to do with the beauty of human beings as with fruits and flowers. And of all the nurseries of earth none has ever equalled that from which Sarah sprang. She was so beautiful that she is again and again called in the Scripture nar-

tive "fair, very fair, lovely to look upon;" so beautiful that wherever she journeyed the admiring eyes of thousands were upon her. Such was her beauty that Abraham was guilty of a weakness in connection with it that you would hardly expect from one of the most despicable characters of modern times. When he went into the land of Egypt he feared that Pharoah would desire her for his harem, and seeing that he (her husband) stood in the way would have him killed. So he told Sarah she must pass herself off as his sister and not his wife. She was indeed his near relative, but so far as his intention was concerned it was a base deception. He was willing to sacrifice his beautiful wife to this heathen monarch, but was not willing to protect her virtue or die in the attempt.

I would not unjustly reflect upon the character of Abraham, the greatest of all the patriarchs, "the Friend of God," and "Father of the faithful." He stands on the roster of faith, single and unapproachable. At the command of God he was willing to sacrifice his son, his only son by his beloved wife. "Take now thy son, thy only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the mountains I will tell thee of, and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering." The man who could stand that could stand anything, but behold him going with his boy, the wood and the knife. The top of the mountain is reached, the altar erected, and the piteous question asked: "Father, here is the altar and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" With bleeding heart the father binds the boy fast to the wood, and the cruel knife is raised—when God

mercifully stays his hand. After such a trial our faith in him cannot be shaken, but is it not strange that such a man could deliver over his lovely wife to the lust of a heathen monarch? But he did it, and Sarah entered Pharaoh's harem. She did not stay there; God protected her by sending plagues upon the monarch, paralyzing him, until he sent her back to her husband "pure as some marble saint niched in cathedral aisles."

Another thing characteristic of Sarah's beauty was that it lasted. At this day and time beauty is a precarious possession, none the less so when produced, as it often is, by the "bloom of youth," and "the balm of thousand flowers." Isaiah says that "beauty is a fading flower," and one of the rude songs I heard in my boyhood has this stanza:

"Beauty is but skin deep,
And ugly to the bone.
Beauty soon fades away,
But ugly holds its own."

But think of Sarah. When she was ninety years old she was so beautiful that Abraham feared Abimelech, the king of Philistines, would fall in love with her, and asked her to again represent herself as his sister and not his wife. The same thing happened as before. Abimelech saw her, admired her bewitching beauty, and had her taken to his harem. God interfered again, and told him to restore her to Abraham at once, as she was his wife, and if he failed, violent death would be the result. Sarah's beauty was evidently "to the bone."

She was not only beautiful, but cultured. She was reared in the most intelligent part of the world, the birthplace of philosophy and astronomy. It was from her native land that the wise men came who visited the infant Christ. Her people gave the names to the heavenly bodies which are reproduced in the names they now bear, such as Mazaroth, Orion, Pleiades, Syrius, Arcturus. In that land when all was quiet, and the stars looked down out of clear skies upon shepherd families, this lovely girl had traced the constellations until she not only knew their names and motion, but had drank in their blessed inspiration. That she was a great woman, her name plainly shows. She was called, Sarai, which means a princess. Afterwards, because of her connection with the promised seed, she was called Sarah, "the princess," that is, the princess of a nation like the stars for multitude. Strange that any one should change so beautiful a name as Sarah into Sallie. As the wife of Abraham, she was a rich princess, for he had vast herds of cattle, and also "silver and gold." Flocks constituted the chief wealth in those days, hence the origin of the word pecuniary (from *pecus* a flock), and Abraham was the world's cattle king. But her chief glory was that she was to be the mother of "the chosen seed of Israel's race," and of God's countless spiritual Israel everywhere.

As to her temper, it must be confessed that she exhibited a strange conduct in her treatment of Hagar. When she returned to Palestine she brought with her as a domestic this Egyptian girl, one of the dark-eyed

sorceresses of the Nile, who was to be greater in history than the one who led Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony captive at her will.

When Sarah became old and saw no way in which the divine promise could be fulfilled in her save by proxy, she did what no woman at this day would have done—presented her bondwoman to her husband as his temporary wife. The result was Ishmael was born, and through him the unselfish woman thought God's plan for calling a nation and blessing the world could be carried out. But such was not God's purpose. He revealed to her by his angel that she herself, though ninety years old, should bear a son. When she heard, this she laughed, and when the child was born he was called Isaac, which means "laughter," and it was destined that he should, indeed, bring joy and gladness to the millions of earth.

No sooner was the new heir born than Ishmael, now thirteen years old, and his mother began to manifest their jealousy. Sarah bore it all until Ishmael began to maltreat her son and set him a vicious example, when she frankly told Abraham that Hagar had to go, that her tent was not large enough henceforth to contain them both. And out into the dreary wilderness the poor bondwoman and her boy were thrust. Painters and poets have seized upon this incident to bring into play the finest flights of their fancy, and all at Sarah's expense. One of the finest masterpieces that adorn the Dresden gallery is a painting called "Hagar in the Wilderness," and cold is the heart that can gaze upon it without emotion.

There is the emaciated boy lying on his back beneath shrubs, famishing with thirst, while his poor but beautiful mother in an agonizing prayer "lifted up her voice and wept," saying: "Let me not see the death of the child."

But let me ask, in justification of Sarah, what other wife would have submitted to such a sacrifice in order to carry out a religious purpose? Consider too how she was repaid for all her kindness, patience and forbearance. It is expressly stated that Hagar "despised Sarah," and that Ishmael, wild and reckless as he was, "mocked Isaac," and she had either to submit to the ruin of Isaac by bad association, or to cast Ishmael out, concerning whom it has been predicted that he should "be a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him." Besides she knew that the God whom she served would come to the relief of Hagar, which he did by his angel, who made ample provision for the two, and God made of Ishmael a great nation, so that the Arabs are his descendants at this very day.

The truth is two errors were committed, Sarah should not have distrusted God so much as to resort to such a wicked expedient, knowing as she must have known that God could of the very stones raise up children unto Abraham. Secondly, Hagar, poor though she was, should not have yielded to such an unholy alliance merely to gratify her ambition. But she has had thousands of followers in all ages of the world, who to secure present advantage have lost their all, who have gone from the palace to the wilderness, from the gay

but wicked haunts of the city to "the bridge of sighs." Let all who would take the first false step know that "the end therefore are the ways of death."

"When lovely woman stoops to folly
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?"

Nothing less than an angel from heaven can rescue one of these lost ones.

But let us turn now to the shining virtues of Sarah, that made her a worthy exemplar for the women of the present day. First in the list of these I place her religious character. She believed in God, believed too in the promised Seed, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world prefigured by the offering which Abraham made on Mt. Moriah. Paul puts her down in the roll-call of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as one of the ancient worthies. She was a believer in family religion, for in all their journeyings wherever she and her husband stopped they built an altar to the Lord, and worshipped there. How many of you practice family religion? and yet Jeremiah calls upon God to pour out his fury on the families that call not upon his name, and the Psalmist declares that "the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just."

She was especially distinguished also (will the ladies pardon me) for obedience to her husband. She said, "the will of my lord is my will." The Apostle Peter holds up the obedience of Sarah as the rule of wives

for all time, saying: "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands. * * * Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord; whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement." Perhaps some of you will say that this is the advice of a married man; so it is, for we read that Peter had a wife, and also a mother-in-law, but the bachelor Paul also said: "Wives be obedient unto your husbands." I hope I may be pardoned for saying that wives should obey their husbands when they are worth obeying, but for some of the noble discreet wives that I know of to obey the trifling, godless, drunken, brutal husbands to whom they are allied—that is simply out of the question.

Another thing that marked the character of Sarah was her humility. Though she was a princess, rich, beautiful and admired by all, she yet possessed "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." It seems to me that the great sin of woman of the present day is pride, that sin by which fell the heavenly angels and by which the earthly angels might fall too, for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." A new silk dress, a new house, a new vehicle, a relationship to a distinguished name, a few glittering jewels, will so turn the heads of some women that there is no living in comfort in the same city with them. John G. Saxe satirized this whole silly tribe when he said:

"O, terribly proud was Miss McBride,
The very personification of pride
As she tripped along in fancy's tide

Adown Broadway on the proper side,
 When the golden sun was setting,
 There was pride in the head she carried so high,
 Pride in her lip, and pride in her eye,
 And a very word of pride in the sigh
 Which her stately bosom was fretting."

Ladies, God Almighty tells you to be humble. He says to you who have "fourteen silk dresses and nothing to wear"—He says to you, "Be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The polished Pagans tell you to be humble. Among the masterpieces of Grecian art is a statue of purest marble called "Humility," which represents a beautiful female fully draped, slightly bending, speaking more eloquently than words can the mighty truth that this is the grace that most highly adorns womar. All nature teaches you to be humble.

" The bird that soars on highest wing
 Builds on the ground her lowly nest,
 And she that doth most sweetly sing,
 Sings in the shade when all things rest.
 In lark and nightingale we see
 What honor hath humility."

The next thing that strikes us in Sarah's character was her economy. Though she had gold and silver, and three hundred and eighteen servants, she did her own cooking. When the feast was ordered for the three angels, it was Sarah who prepared it. There were no cooking stoves in those days either. But cooking, with her, was no great matter, the bill of fare set before the angels consisting only of roast veal,

cakes, butter and milk. Considering the extent and variety of culinary operations now, I don't ask that you should cook, but I do ask that you practice economy in every possible way. Extravagance is a sin that follows fast on pride. One reason why there are not more marriages is because young men cannot support their wives in the style to which they have been used. The thought and desire of marriage doubtless occurs to every young man, but when he thinks of the dresses, and particularly of the modern trimmings; when he thinks of enormous Saratoga trunks, with contents sufficient to open a ladies' furnishing store; when he dwells on the high price of board at first-class hotels, or the high rent of first-class houses, he leaves the splendidly furnished parlor where the flashing gas jets are reflected back from costly diamonds, retires to his own desolate chamber and consoles himself with "the reveries of a bachelor," while the disconsolate maiden is left alone to reflect that

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these; we might have been."

The last point I make in the character of Sarah was her maternal fidelity. She took care of her boy. It was that Isaac might be kept pure and spotless that she banished the wicked Ishmael into the desert. But are there not mothers now who, instead of shielding their sons from vicious associates, are, by their own example, by their wine parties, by card playing, by chaperoning giddy youngsters in a godless dance, leading their loved ones along the road to ruin? O,

mother, do you ever stop and ask yourself the question: Where is my wandering boy to-night? Oh, bitter indeed as the cry of Hagar was the wail of the mother who said:

“Where is my wandering boy to-night,
The boy of my tenderest care,
The boy that was once my joy and light,
The child of my love and prayer

“Once he was pure as morning dew,
As he knelt at his mother’s knee;
No face was so bright, no heart more true
And none was so sweet as he.

“Go for my wandering boy to-night,
Go search for him where you will;
But bring him to me with all his blight,
And tell him I love him still.”

But we must bid adieu to Sarah as she at length had to bid adieu to the world. “And Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years old; these were the years of the life of Sarah, and Sarah died in Kirjath-arba.” She was buried in the cave of Machpelah. No monument marks the spot, but had I the power I would erect one, and place upon it a simple but expressive inscription.

Cornelia, the mother of Caius and Tiberius Gracchus, loved her boys, called them her jewels, and said she wished to go down to posterity not as the mother-in-law of Scipio, but as the mother of these children who had ever been her tenderest care. When she died a monument was erected and on it placed only the words “Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi.” On

the monument I would build to the noble woman now sketched, I would place this simple inscription in enduring marble, and nothing more:

SARAH,
The wife of Abraham
and
Mother of Isaac.



REBEKAH.

LECTURE III.

REBEKAH, THE BEAUTIFUL BUT DECEPTIVE WIFE.

CRUSHING indeed is the blow which an aged husband feels when he loses his wife, or when the wife loses her husband. If the pair be well suited, their love increases with advancing years.

Pleased at first

“ Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.”

And yet every time the marriage knot is tied either a widow or widower is made, for it is very rarely, if ever, the case that both go together. They may marry again, but that fact does not retract from the power and sacredness of their sorrow. I see no reason why second marriages are not as holy as first marriages, and why they may not be considered in the light of a compliment to the former partners, though not so intended. When the married life has been unhappy, they are not likely to try it again.

Abraham postponed his second marriage until he was 140 years old. Just how old a man or woman must be before giving up the subject, I cannot say. An old gentleman in Georgia married when he was one hundred years of age; three children were born to the marriage, and he lived to see the oldest vote.

Abraham, sincerely mourning the loss of his dear Sarah, thought not of a new wife for himself yet, but was deeply concerned as to who should be the wife of Isaac, through whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed. He did not want him to marry any of the heathen Canaanitish women among whom he lived. He felt the force of that sentiment uttered centuries after, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath light with darkness or Christ with Belial?" I think parents of to-day would do well to learn a lesson here. They too often act upon the principle that "Cupid does not study theology," and are willing that their sons or daughters may act with the utmost indifference to church and even religion itself. All such "sow to the wind, and" let them not be surprised if they shall "reap the whirlwind."

Abraham concluded, therefore, that a wife must be procured for his son in his native Mesopotamia, the land of beautiful women, and he wanted her taken from his own kindred. But the question was how to secure that object so devoutly to be wished? He was too old to go so long a journey himself; and he feared that if Isaac went, he would be so enamoured of the people and country that he would not return and the land of promise would be lost to him. At this juncture he sent for his favorite servant and counsellor, Eliezer. He requested him to go and bring a wife for his son. Eliezer told him he feared that if he found a suitable girl, she would not return with him, but Abraham assured him that he, by his prayers for God's

blessing, would see to that. Eliezer then took a train—not a train of cars, but of camels—and accompanied by a few servants, started on his journey of 500 miles.

After several days of wearisome travel with his "ships of the desert" Eliezer came in sight of Haran, the city where Abraham's kindred lived. Having but one purpose, and with a shrewdness which would indicate that match-making was the business of his life, he took his station at one of the wells whither he knew the girls would be coming down in the afternoon to draw water, where he could get a look at them and ascertain which one would be best suited to his master Isaac. There were other reasons why he sat by the well. It was a hot country and he was weary with travel and thirsty. What spot so inviting, therefore, as a well? In the beautiful pastoral and nomadic pictures of the old Testament how often do "wells of water" lend a charm to the descriptions—the well of Abraham, the wells of Jethro and Moses, the "well of Bethlehem that is by the gate," and this well to be ever-memorable because of the circumstance now to be related. He offered a fervent prayer that God would send the right one, saying on bended knee: "O Lord God of my Master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water, and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink;' and she shall say 'Drink and I will give thy camels drink also,' let the same be

she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac, and thereby shall I know that thou hast shown kindness to my master."

Hardly had he finished speaking before a beautiful maiden appeared, having her pitcher on her shoulder. The inspired record tells us that "the damsel was very fair to look upon," with a form doubtless that realized the ancient conception of Venus, "with eyes soft and liquid as those of the gazelle's, a rich bloom mantling her cheek, and with an expression of sweetness and modesty which, like the green veil of the moss rose, heightened every charm."

Now comes the courtship. Do not smile because the courting was done by proxy. How much of the courting in this world is now done by proxy ! Anxious papas and managing mammas and officious friends —how often do they do the work! Glittering traps are often set by parents, into which the unwary birds walk. And sometimes man and woman, urged by others, go to the altar like fools who know not what they do. I think, however, with Shakespeare, that marriage is too serious a business to be dealt in by attorneyship. Still in many countries of the world, parents arrange the whole affair without even the knowledge or consent of those most interested. This is specially true where crowns or kingdoms are involved.

When she had filled her pitcher, Eliezer rose and said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." And she said (O, how sharp these girls are) "Drink, my lord," and she hastened and let down her

pitcher upon her hand and gave him drink, and when she had done giving him drink, she said, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." This she did, and it was exactly the evidence which he prayed the future wife of Isaac might give. How many belles at this day would have been so polite to a wayfaring man.

Perhaps there is not one who would not have said, "How dare you ask me to give you water out of my pitcher; get down, you lazy thing, and get water for yourself." If some could be found to grant this request, who like this maiden would have drawn water for the camels? Now came her reward. "As the camels had done drinking the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold." For the amount invested, politeness pays better than anything in the world. He now asks her name, and wished to know if there was room enough in her house for him, and his, for the night. Her name, she said was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, and she said moreover unto him, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

Rebekah ran home and told the family all she had seen and heard. She had a brother whose name was Laban, who was the head of the family, and when he heard the girl's story, and saw the golden presents, he ran down to the well and invited the stranger in. A fine supper had been spread for him, but he refused to eat until he told his mission, which was that he might secure a wife for his young master, and how the Lord

had directed him to Rebekah. One thing that he said particularly impressed the brother who had an eye to business. It was this: "I am Abraham's servant, and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he has become great and He hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and man servants and maid servants, and camels and asses," and told them that unto Isaac, his son, for whom he wished Rebekah, his master had given all his possessions. "Then Laban and Bethuel," the brother and father, answered and said, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord:"—of course, especially the flocks, herds, silver and gold—and they said: "Behold, Rebekah is before thee. Take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." Eliezer then "brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment and gave them to Rebekah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things." Happy Rebekah! If there is anything that a pretty girl does like, it is to marry rich. Happy Laban! If there is anything that an enterprising brother likes, it is to see his sister marry a fellow with full pockets, while he himself is remembered with "precious things." After the contract was made they all ate and drank and retired to rest. But poor Rebekah, we pity her even in the midst of her good fortune! Others might have slept, but she slept not. In the morning she was to bid adieu to mother, father, brothers and sisters; to the home she had so dearly loved, for "be it ever so humble there's no place like home," to her beautiful associates who had so often, with merry hearts, accompanied her to

the well with which her name was to be associated for ever; she must bid adieu to her native land, to behold it no more. She must go with a stranger 500 miles to an unknown country, then to wed a man whom she had never seen. Think you not that these thoughts drove sleep from her eyes and slumber from her eyelids. No woman ever goes to the altar who does not make sacrifices. She gives up her all to be guided and controlled by another, and he who would withhold his protection from her when needed, who would re-quite her devotion with unkindness, or betray her truth with infidelity, is too foul a wretch to walk the earth and mock the name of man, and upon him shall be invoked the avenging furies who "with whips and scorpions should lash the rascal naked through the world." Rebekah's family asked that the girl might be permitted to remain with them ten days, but Eliezer said "Hinder me not." Then they said they would leave it all with her. The girl was called and the question propounded: "Wilt thou go with this man?" and she said "I will go."

I tell you there are timid girls, afraid of a flock of sheep, who are yet brave enough to go with a man that Goliath would be afraid of.

Setting out on their journey they were prospered till they came to the country of Abraham. Rebekah, who was doubtless on the lookout, caught the sight of a man in the distance and asked who it was. Eliezer told her it was the looked-for Isaac, who had gone out into the field at eventide to meditate. We may well imagine the subject of his meditations, for "he lifted

up his eyes and saw and beheld the camels coming." He approached, and Rebekah alighting from her camel, and covering herself with a veil, went to meet him. This custom of bringing the bride to the house of the bridegroom obtained in both Greece and Rome, and in many other countries. In Greece she was borne in a wagon, and on reaching the husband's house the axle was broken to signify she must stay at home now.

Marrying "unsight unseen" is a dangerous business. In this case it was all right because directed by the "angel of the Lord." Rebekah beheld a handsome, mild-mannered, amiable man of forty, and Isaac beheld one of the most beautiful of women.

Some time ago two people married in Atlanta, Ga., who met for the first time an hour before their marriage. "How do you like me?" he asked. "Charmed," said the lady; "I had expected to meet a gray-haired old man, not the handsome young fellow that you are. And how do you like me?" she asked. "Why," said he, "I expected to see a beautiful woman, but I have found an angel." Sometimes the reverse happens; instead of a man the woman gets an imbecile, and instead of an angel the man gets a devil.

Rebekah means "a noosed cord," and the loop was very fairly around Isaac's neck. He took his beautiful bride into his father's tent, and forgot his grief for his mother in love for his new wife. The two lived together happily for twenty years, during which time they had no children. This fact, strange to say, accounts for their domestic peace. Children are very properly regarded as a great blessing to parents.

“Children of youth are like arrows in the hands of the mighty, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.” They are ordinarily a band of union and love between parents, but here we have an exception to the rule, perhaps for the consolation and encouragement of those who have no children. Consider Rebekah now as an unnatural mother.

After twenty years of connubial happiness, twin sons were born to the pair. Esau the elder, and Jacob the younger. Twins are very often alike, sometimes as much so as “two black-eyed peas,” but these were very unlike. Esau was dark and covered with hair. Jacob was a beautiful blonde. Esau was reticent, Jacob talkative. Esau grew up to be a great hunter. Jacob was fond of flocks, and domestic life. Isaac was partial to Esau chiefly because he brought him venison, of which the patriarch was very fond. Rebekah was partial to Jacob from the very first, and she showed her partiality on all occasions, so that Esau never felt at home even in his parents’ tent. The good mother has no favorite child, but all are alike dear to her. We have all been touched by the incident related of a poor mother of seven children, whom she could barely support, when a gentleman offered to take any one of them and adopt it as his own. The mother was given a night to decide which it should be. After all had gone to sleep she went from one to another, trying with almost broken heart to decide, but at last she resolved that not one could be spared, but that they should all live or die together. If the true mother has partiality for any, it is for the weak and helpless.

In a not very distant city I know a wealthy gentleman who has a weak-minded daughter, and the deference he shows to her has won the admiration of all. A father who had been absent from home for a long time, on his return was met by his children, each one of whom had a beautiful bouquet for him except an idiot son, who presented a bundle of dry twigs. The father told the others to stand aside until he could first press the afflicted darling to his heart. But Rebekah turned her back upon the dark and hairy Esau and seemed to live only for Jacob. She had several reasons for this, it is true; Jacob was handsomer and more congenial. God had said that the elder should serve the younger; and the fact that Isaac loved Esau best gave her some excuse; but they were both her children, and sad is it indeed when a mother forgets her own child. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" That question settles forever the unnatural conduct of Rebekah. That partiality would not have been so bad had it not led her into the perpetration of vile schemes, to promote Jacob's success at the expense of Esau. Consider then the deceitful and treacherous wife. It is a terrible thing for a woman to deceive her husband. At the altar she swore that she would love, honor and obey him, and leaving all others cleave only unto him so long as they both should live. To unite therefore in a conspiracy against his interests and wishes is to be guilty of a baseness which no language can describe. When the husband finds that he has been betrayed by his wife, the world becomes a blank

and he has nothing to live for. Beautifully it has been said:

“The night has a thousand eyes,
The day but one,
But the light of the whole world dies
With the setting sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes
The heart but one,
But the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.”

But let me say it is just as bad for a husband to deceive his wife as the wife the husband. At the altar his oath was similar—that he would love, honor and protect her, and leaving all others cleave only to her—and when he violates this obligation, as so many do, he becomes a perjured wretch in the sight of God, man, woman, and the Holy Angels. The Bible does not recognize one code of morals for man, and another for woman, and the silly twaddle we hear and read in the newspapers about the pardonable immoralities of men is as untrue as it is disgusting, and as disgusting as it is untrue. In the case before us, however, Isaac was faithful to Rebekah, but Rebekah was unfaithful to Isaac. She was guilty of two intrigues that in their far-reaching results equalled anything ever achieved by Lucretia Borgia or Catherine de Medici. The first was cheating Esau, her oldest son, and Isaac’s favorite, out of his birthright, or right of primogeniture, by which the headship of the family and all the property would fall to his lot. She acted upon the principle that “the nearest way to a man’s heart was down his

throat." At her instigation Jacob prepared a savory meal—a mess of pottage to be in readiness, all smoking and hot, when Esau returned from his hunting expedition. Soon the wild boy came in, nearly starved, "faint and at the point to die," and finding the tent redolent with the aroma of cooked pottage exclaimed: "Feed me I pray thee with that same red pottage for I am faint." The future father of the Jews refused to give him any except for pay. Jacob said: "Sell me this day thy birthright," and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles, and he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Esau did wrong, and was henceforth to be known in history as the "profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." But some things are to be said in extenuation. He knew that Jacob and his mother were going to rob him of his birthright anyway. It was only a question of time, for when such a woman as Rebekah sets her head to do anything she is going to do it. Besides he was at the point of death, and in case he died the birthright would be of no use to him, but would naturally fall to Jacob. "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" So for present gratification he parted with his important future interests. But has he had no imitators among the sons and daughters of men? Have there not been those in all after ages to whom the proverb has been applied: "He sold his birthright for a mess of pottage." How many ministers are there who might have wielded

powerful influence for good, and gathered stars that would have decked their crowns forever, but who, in a moment of temptation, "sold their birthright for a mess of pottage" and blasted all their hopes! How many merchants who, by crookedness in trade, by the use of false balances, or false charges, have prospered for the moment, but found, at last, that they "sold their birthright for a mess of pottage!" How many lawyers who, by dishonesty in the settlement of estates, have blackened their good name, and found, when too late, that they "sold their birthright for a mess of pottage!" How many legislators and politicians who, by taking bribes, have been remanded back to the bar of the people whom they have defrauded, to pine in obscurity over the thought that they "sold their birthright for a mess of pottage!" How many modern Rebekahs, merely to gratify their pride and vanity, have done violence to the finest feelings of their nature, and married men whom they did not love, but whom they supposed to be rich, and have awokened from the dream of grandeur to find that they have "sold their birthright," yea, sold themselves, "for a mess of pottage!" How many unrepentant sinners are there who to enjoy the present moment part with eternal blessedness !

Our Saviour asked, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Esau has answered the question. He gains a mess of pottage and loses the blessing of God, parts with the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that shall never fade away, and surrenders his crown of glory.

The second deceptive thing that Rebekah did was to cheat Esau out of his father's blessing, which prerogative had the effect of a testamentary bequest. It may be said that since he gave up his birthright, he had no claim on the blessing, but Isaac did not think so and Rebekah had to resort to a new stratagem, which equalled in cunning anything ever achieved by woman. Isaac, who was now old and blind, and saw the necessity of making provision for the future, ordered Esau to go out into the field and bring him his favorite meal, that, being strengthened, he might bless him before he died. Rebekah heard the request, and when Esau was gone she informed Jacob of her ruse, which was for him to go to the flock and get two kids, which she would prepare in imitation of venison, so that the younger might get the old man's blessing instead of Esau. Jacob told her that Isaac might "feel" him and detect the fraud, as Esau was a hairy man. She informed him that she would see to that; so after the meat was cooked, she dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes and put goat skins on his hands and neck, and told him to go at once and get the blessing, and if he failed the curse should be upon her.

Jacob, ever ready to do his mother's bidding, went to the old man's couch with his mouth full of falsehoods. We can imagine Rebekah standing in convenient concealment, watching the progress of events, and ready in case of exposure, like Lady Macbeth, to plunge the knife into her husband's heart.

At first Isaac doubted and exclaimed: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of

Esau;" but reassured by the repeated lies of Jacob, he bestowed the unalterable blessing upon him, and thus Jacob by fraud became the father of Israel's race. Soon Esau came bounding in with the real venison, and with his own voice, and his own hairy hands lifted up, implored the blessing. But it was too late. "He found no place for repentance though he sought it carefully with tears." Isaac did his best for him by making him the father of a great nation—the Edomites—but not of the "chosen seed," and the wronged, but hitherto amiable boy, was now converted into a remorseless avenger. This brings me to notice in the last place the disconsolate mother. It has been said that "cheating luck never thrives," and the world now indorses the sentiment that "honesty is the best policy." The success of Rebekah's plots threw her into the most disconsolate and wretched situation. Esau swore the death of Jacob, and the mother feared that she would see re-enacted in her own tent the tragedy of Cain. To add to her reproach, Esau became a bigamist, taking to himself two heathen wives. The grey hairs of Isaac, her husband, were brought down in sorrow to the grave, and what was the worst pang, Jacob had to flee for his life to Haran, five hundred miles away, and so the doting mother was destined never to look on the face of her favorite son again. Last of all, Rebekah overcome with sorrow and disappointment died; but the sacred historian fails to give any account of either her death or burial, and the most appropriate inscription that could be placed over her neglected grave would be "Died of a broken heart."

She cannot be justified on the ground that she was an instrument for carrying out the purposes of God. The fact that Jacob was declared to be the father of the chosen nation, can no more excuse the wickedness that brought it about, than the death of Christ which secures the salvation of the world can excuse the treason of Judas Iscariot by whom his death was accomplished. But let us hope that she was sufficiently punished in this life, and that she is even now dwelling in perfect happiness "with Abraham, Isaac," and above all, with her beloved "Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."



LECTURE IV.

RACHEL, THE LOVELY WIFE OF JACOB.

WRITERS on the women of the Bible have either ignored the character of Rachel altogether, or given to her an inferior position, chiefly because her life was unmarked by startling incident. But the galaxy of "Famous Women of the Old Testament" would be incomplete without this star, which has shed its radiance adown the centuries, and over a people "like the stars of the sky for multitude." It is impossible that the wife of Jacob, and mother of Joseph and Benjamin could have been an ordinary woman, and while she may have shone with reflected glory, she, like the planetary Venus, far eclipsed other stars of her sex, who were more fixed in their characters and spheres.

Her history recalls to our minds the beautiful pastoral scene brought to our attention in the life of Rebekah. A hundred years before, Abraham had sent Eliezer his servant to Mesopotamia to procure a wife for Isaac. That servant on reaching the City of Nahor had halted at a well to refresh himself. Whilst there the beautiful Rebekah came, and took him to her own home, from which place he bore her to be the beloved bride of his master, Isaac. What do we behold now?

Jacob wandering in exile from the land of Canaan reaches the City of Nahor. Tired and worn with travel he sits down for rest and refreshment at this same well. He inquires of the shepherds there assembled of his uncle Laban. They inform him that he was well, and looking up, and beholding the lovely shepherdess coming with a flock of sheep, said, "There comes his daughter, Rachel, now." Jacob enraptured at the sight of his beautiful cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother, met and kissed her, and generously offered to draw water for her sheep. She was as much delighted as he, and "love at first sight" took possession of both.

In this country love making is generally accomplished in private. Lovers seek the grove, the garden, the retired grotto, and "whisper what they feel when no one else is near." But in the East the public well was the favorite place to which they resorted when under the influence of the tender passion. Tristam, in his Natural History of the Bible, says, "Wells are still the spots where the youth and girls of Bedouin life congregate, and at the wells alone is Oriental courtship carried on to this day. The Syrian girl, especially if a Druse or a Christian, unlike the secluded daughter of the towns, is frequently entrusted with the care of her father's flock. The well, the most precious of possessions, is carefully closed with a heavy slab until all those whose flocks are entitled to share its water have gathered. The time is noon. The first comers gather and report the gossip of the tribe. The story of Jacob and Rachel is, in its most

minute details, a transcript of the Arab life of to-day."

This custom seems strange to us, but there is no denying the fact that a well is strikingly suggestive to lovers. We can fancy one standing by his darling, as he exclaims, "I thirst for your charms as the hart panteth for water. My love is as deep as this well; as pure as its liquid treasures; as perennial as its sweet springs—yea

"Wer't the last drop in the well
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
Tis to *Thee* that I would drink.'"

So thought Jacob as he gazed upon beautiful Rachel. But Jacob had not reached this blissful state without an experience. Having, at the instigation of his mother cheated his brother Esau out of his birth-right, he was compelled to fly for his life. On his way, overtaken by the night, whose darkness symbolized the gloom of his own sad heart, he laid himself down to rest with a stone for his pillow and the canopy of heaven his only covering. It was there that he saw his famous ladder (a piece of which is kept at Rome as one of the veritable relics of the "Saints") reaching from earth to heaven, and on which the angels of God were descending and ascending. A happy vision was this to Jacob, which brought peace and rest to his soul, gave hope for the future, and pointed to the real Ladder of which this was only the type, whose divinity penetrated the heavens,

whose humanity touched the earth, and who in his wonderful work was sustained and comforted by angels. The night brings out the stars, and bruises bring out the sweetest perfume of the flowers; so let us rejoice even in those sorrows which bring to us the light of God's countenance, and the sweetness of his grace. Not only Jacob, but every true Christian may sing,

“Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Though like a wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me;
My rest a stone;
Still in my dreams I'd be
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Then let my way appear
Steps unto heaven,
All that Thou sendest me
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me,
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.”

From Bethel, which was the house of God, and gate of heaven to his soul, Jacob passed to the delights of a new and happy love.

When, led by the fair Rachel, he reached the house

of Laban, he was warmly welcomed by his uncle who proffered him employment, and prevailed on him to stay. Jacob did not require much persuasion, for he became deeply smitten with Rachel, and asked for her hand in marriage. Laban told him he might have her if he would work for him seven years. That would seem a pretty long time to many a young fellow of to-day, and instead of going to work, the first thing, perhaps, he would think of would be an elopement. But Jacob accepted the terms, "which seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." This is what may be called a long engagement, and long engagements seldom turn out well. The present instance is not an exception. The seven years of service past, great preparations were made for the wedding. The fires were burning brightly, the guests had assembled, Jacob stands waiting to be made the happiest of men. All at once, conducted by her father, the bride appears closely veiled according to the custom of those times. The ceremony is performed, the veil lifted, and O, horrors, it is the blear-eyed Leah, and not Rachel, that Jacob has wed. Here is an evidence of duplicity on the part of Laban, and of "cheek" (pardon the expression) on the part of Leah unequalled in "history and tradition." Astonished, disappointed, Jacob exclaimed "I want Rachel," for Leah was a poor substitute for the idol of his heart. Her dull, weak eyes compared with the splendid gazelle-like orbs of Rachel were as

"Torches that have burned all night
Through some impure and godless rite,"

compared with the splendid rays of the morning sun. But Laban said no, that in his country and among his people the oldest daughter always had to marry first. We hear much of officious mothers-in-law, but if anything can equal the officiousness of this father-in-law I have never met with it.

The old gentleman, who evidently had an eye to business, told Jacob he might have Rachel too, if he would work for him seven years more. He agreed to the proposition, and anticipated the fulfillment of the contract by marrying Rachel at once. I do not pretend to excuse the bigamy of Jacob, but in extenuation the state of the times, and absence of civil law on the subject, should be borne in mind.

Jacob now thought of going back to Canaan, but Laban wished to have his services longer and proposed to give him a large proportion of his flocks if he would work six years more. This he agreed to do, and in the meantime retaliated by defrauding the old man of a good part of his property. At the end of the six years, and twenty in all in Mesopotamia, Joseph his only child by Rachel being five years old, in obedience to the call of God he set out with his numerous family, flocks, and herds for distant Canaan. The names of his children were as follows: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Dinah. Being accused of stealing the household gods of Laban, he was pursued, but on being arrested Rachel concealed the stolen treasures, and a peaceable settlement was effected. The immense caravan now proceeded on its way till the

brook Jabbok was reached, when sudden fear seized Jacob because Esau with four hundred men was coming to meet him. He at once, after the Arab fashion, sent presents to his brother to appease him, and arranged his bands so that the least esteemed, if attacked, might bear the assault, while the others could make their escape. Rachel and Joseph were placed in the rear, as being dearest of all, and he retired to pray to God for help in the great emergency. His petition on that occasion was the first prayer ever recorded, and it was a masterpiece of its kind. It was as follows: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." After this while the bands were at the front he retired in the night to the banks of the Jabbok when one of the most remarkable struggles took place ever known on earth. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day, and when he saw that he prevailed not against him he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said

‘Let me go for the day breaketh.’ And he said ‘I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.’ And he said unto him ‘what is thy name?’ And he said ‘Jacob.’ And he said thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said Tell me, I pray thee, thy name, and he said, wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.” The lameness of Jacob has been commemorated by his descendants, who to this day refuse to eat the thigh or sinewy part of any animal. Its moral significance has been thus commemorated by Wesley:

“Contented now, upon my thigh
I halt till life’s short journey end,
All helplessness, all weakness, I
On Thee alone for strength depend;
Nor have I power from Thee to move;
Thy nature and thy name is love.”

Thus Jacob not only gave us the first recorded prayer, but also the first notable illustration as to how we should wrestle with the Spirit in order to receive the blessing. But where was Rachel while her distressed husband was thus engaged? She doubtless, pressing little Joseph to her bosom and thinking of the fierce Esau, and the “swellings of Jordan,” was engaged in prayer too. Ah, as that good woman got down on her knees that night I fancy that I can almost hear her sweet voice as she in effect exclaims,

“In the lonely night of sorrow
Hide thou me,

Till in glory dawns the morrow
 Hide thou me.
When in sight of Jordan's billow—
Let thy bosom be my pillow—
 Hide me O, thou Rock of Ages,
 Safe in Thee."

Jacob at the ford of Jabbok really became a new man. Before he had been dishonest, crafty, and cunning; he had deceived men, but he had found out that he could not deceive God, and sustained and comforted by the promise made to him, he went on to find Esau not an enemy breathing threatenings and slaughter, but a friend, a brother, who fell on his neck with kisses. Declining the escort offered by Esau Jacob now crossed over the Jordan and entered Canaan, henceforth to be the theatre of a wonderful history. His reappearance here with his shepherd tribe was a great historical event and may be compared to a little rivulet which was destined to become the gulf stream of nations. "Abraham's arrival had been only the first wave of the Hebrew movement, and it had for the time receded. In Jacob's return it flowed back with permanent results."

He proceeded to Shechem, the ancient abode of Abraham, but it had grown since that day to a powerful city. Here he bought a piece of land, pitched his tent, and built an altar to God commemorative of his new name. He also dug the well known as "Jacob's well," so renowned in history, by which Jesus Christ, his divine son, was to teach the woman of Sychar a nobler worship than idolatry; and here in after days

Joseph, now a youth, ordered that his bones should be buried.

Here he was not destined to remain long, for a conflict ensued with the people of Shechem which, though it resulted in the capture of the place by Jacob, was the occasion of his removal. Shechem was too much exposed to marauding Canaanites as a place of residence; and he moved to Bethel, where twenty years before he had enjoyed his vision of angels. The vow which he made on that occasion had never been honored, and it was proper that he should now fulfill it. The fact that Rachel had stolen Laban's gods showed that Israel's family was tainted with idolatry, which must be purged out at once, and if possible forever. The whole tribe therefore were required to give up everything of a heathen character,—Rachel the teraphim; others idols that they loved, and those who had them, earrings and armlets used as religious charms, and the whole when collected were buried under the great oak at Shechem, known as that beneath which Abraham had pitched his tent, but now called the "oak of the magicians." A purification of the persons and raiment was also required, and thus disinfected of idolatry all vowed exclusive allegiance to the God of Bethel. Here a remarkable death took place. It was that of Deborah, the old nurse of Rebekah, who having followed her mistress as long as she lived, chose to end her days with her favorite son Jacob, and now at Bethel, full of years and faithful deeds, she sank to rest, and was buried under a tree which on her account was ever after known as "the oak of weeping."

But a still more remarkable death was soon to occur. Leaving Bethel and journeying southward when they came near Ephrath, "which is Bethlehem," Rachel died in giving birth to a son, exclaiming with almost her expiring breath—"call his name Benoni—the son of my sorrow." But the grateful father changed his name to Benjamin "the son of my right hand." Jacob's grief on this occasion knew no bounds. He tenderly loved Rachel. He loved her at first sight and ever afterwards. In his old age, when he spoke his last words to Joseph's sons, before he died in the land of Egypt, forty years after her death, he spoke of her loss with all the tenderness and affection as if she had been that moment taken from him.

When a good woman dies at this day we say "a mother in Israel" has fallen. What shall we say of her who was the wife of the original Israel, and the mother of his sons?

A beautiful, helpful, and devoted wife under the most trying circumstances; without one shadow or stain ever darkening the sky of her virtuous life; the mother of the mightiest of all the patriarchs, Joseph, and of Benjamin who really proved the son of Jacob's good fortune, in awakening all the tender sympathies of Joseph's nature when he was exalted to one of the highest stations of earth, she breathed her last mourned by all who knew her, and crowned with their benedictions.

Jacob did not leave her grave unmarked. "Jacob set a pillar; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." While the original pillar may have been

destroyed, Rachel's Tomb stands on the same spot, and is viewed by all travellers in Palestine with an interest that can better be imagined than described. Surely the question that has been so often propounded "What is hallowed ground?" finds an answer here. It is the ground where Rachel was buried near Bethlehem, above which in after years the angels were to gather and shout, while a wondrous babe was lying near her mouldering form, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men;" when soon another voice was to be heard as Herod sought the young child's life to destroy it, "lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not;" and where a still mightier voice is yet to be heard, "When all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life." Verily that is hallowed ground. Among those who shall hear this last voice will be the long slumbering Rachel. Her scattered dust will be re-collected, re-animated, and reunited to her glorified spirit and then this famous and faithful woman, more beautiful and more glorious than ever, will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and *Jacob* in the kingdom of heaven."



LECTURE V.

MIRIAM, THE GRAND, PATRIOTIC OLD MAID.

IN my last four lectures I have had to do with wives: Eve, the wife of Adam; Sarah, the wife of Abraham; Rebekah, the wife of Isaac; and Rachel, the wife of Jacob. In this I have to treat of a grand old maid.

It is not necessary that a woman should get married in order to be useful. The records of the state, the church, the benevolent society, the hospital, the sick room, and even the nursery, show that some of the grandest women who ever adorned this earth have been old maids. Where was there a mightier ruler than good Queen Bess, who said to her assembled troops, and in the near prospect of battle, "I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and soul of a king, and of a king of England too—I'll be your general." When was there ever such a "ministering angel" in human form, as Florence Nightingale, who took her fortune and her life in her hands and expended both among the suffering soldiers of the Crimea, and to whom is due the credit for the great reformation that has taken place in the hospitals of the world? When we come to church and benevolent work they constitute "the salt of the earth."

Among those who love children most, and train them best, I place old maids; and many a father who makes the care of his children the reason for marrying again, would do far better often by placing them under the kind and competent care of one of these saintly women. I have known many old maids in my life, and I do not think that I have ever known one who was not intelligent, good and useful.

I utterly detest the flings that are often made at this interesting class of society. They do not marry, as a general thing, from sheer choice. Conscious of their own merits they are not disposed to associate with those who are not their equals. They are birds too wise to be caught by chaff, and prefer single blessedness to double misery. If you would know the true worth of old maids, put them side by side with the old bachelors; and you will find that they tower above them as the "Peaks of Otter" lift their heads above the surrounding Blue Mountains of Virginia. Grandest of all the old maids, the highest peak in the mountain range of Celibacy, stands Miriam.

Who was she? She was the daughter of Amram and Jochebed, the sister of Moses and Aaron. I am not one of those who lay much stress upon the mere circumstance of birth. "I would not were I fifty times a prince be a pensioner on the dead." John B. Gough once told some men who were prating of their ancestors that they reminded him of a hill of potatoes —the best part of them was under ground. Still there is after all something in blood. "I honor birth and ancestry," says Bulwer, "when they are regarded as

incentives to exertion, not the title deeds to sloth." If any one is to be honored for ancestry that person is Miriam. Paul regarded it an honor to trace the most distant relationship to Moses. What was it then to be his own sister? the sister of the man concerning whom it has been said:

"He was the truest soldier
That ever buckled sword,
And he the sweetest poet
That ever breathed a word.
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, thoughts half so sage,
As he wrote down for men."

Where did she live? She lived in Egypt, on the banks of the Nile, near the city of On, the seat of the ancient kings. This statement suggests another question—how came she, being an Israelite, in Egypt? It will be remembered that the children of Israel, owing to the famine in Canaan, had gone to Egypt, and were prevailed upon to remain by Joseph, who was first sold into slavery and afterwards elevated to power. A hundred and fifty years had elapsed; Joseph and his immediate successors had died, and the children of Israel had increased to five hundred thousand exclusive of old men, women and children, making in all about two million. Pharaoh, the reigning king, fearing their power, had heaped cruelties and hardships upon them in the hope that their number might be diminished or their spirits might be broken. At the time of which I speak the people were in the land of

bondage with remorseless taskmasters over them; their lightest employment being the making of brick without straw, unless they secured it themselves, which was almost impossible. Inasmuch as they still increased, Pharaoh ordered all the male children to be destroyed. It was at this time that there lived on the banks of the Nile this interesting Hebrew family. But, will you believe it, from this little circle were to go forth influences of greater importance to the world than the battles fought on that historic soil by Darius, the Persian, Mark Antony, the Roman, and Napoleon, the incomparable Frenchman. From that palm-thatched hut was to come forth a man who would be greater than the mightiest Pharaoh that ever ruled, and a woman greater than the greatest Cleopatra that graced the Egyptian throne. The name of the man was Moses and the name of the woman was Miriam. I believe that surroundings have much to do with the formation of character. The great Nile, the rich and fertile valley, the deep-sounding seas, the luxuriant verdure, the blazing sun: had these things nothing to do in producing a hardy and cultured race, so that Egypt became the seat of civilization and learning for ages? Had these things nothing to do with the erection of cities like Thebes, which Homer calls "the world's great empress on Egyptian plains," or Memphis, or Heliopolis, or Cairo, concerning which the prophet says, "he who has not seen Cairo has not seen the world?" Have these things nothing to do with the great works of art that have been the wonder and despair of the ages, particularly with the pyramids,

those miracles in stone, the largest one covering twelve acres, and from whose lofty height the great Napoleon himself drank inspiration! And I believe that her surroundings had much to do with the development of the great character now to be described.

Let us consider Miriam first as the precocious little girl; secondly as the gifted poetess; thirdly as the inspired prophetess; fourthly as the punished sinner, and lastly as the dying saint.

At the time of which I speak there were two children in the family, Miriam, the eldest, twelve years, and Aaron aged six years. Soon a beautiful baby boy was born, with dark bright eyes, ruddy face and dimpled cheek. Inspiration declares that he was "a goodly child." But what would become of him? The decree had gone forth that every male child should be destroyed. O, mothers, think how that mother's heart was wrung with anguish at the thought of losing her boy. Think how she endeavored to still his faintest cry lest some officious Egyptian should hear him and instantly snatch him from her arms, a victim to heathen cruelty. That fond mother found some place where she could hide him and she kept him hid for three months. What will a mother not do? What sacrifice will she not make to save her babe? I read of a mother who lost her way in a snow storm, having her infant in her arms. Compelled to stay out in the cold during the night she took off her wrappings and placed them around the child. In the morning her dead body was found, while the child, warm and comfortable, was endeavoring to draw nourishment from her frozen

breast. We will never know till the light of eternity dawns upon us how much we owe to our mothers.

The time came when Jochebed could no longer conceal her child, perhaps because there was already a suspicion of his whereabouts; and she concluded to put her trust in God and place him on the bosom of the generous Nile. As the mothers were required to give their male children to the crocodiles of that river, it may be that she, discovered in her attempt at concealment, was ordered to do the same thing, and that she took the precaution to preserve his life as long as possible. Be that as it may, she constructed a little cradle out of the bulrushes, and making it water-tight with pitch placed in it the precious freight and committed it to the waters of the sacred river of the Egyptians.

Miriam, the sister of twelve years, was placed amid the palm trees a little distance off to watch it, and the mother returned to her desolate home. But she had a noble representative in little Miriam. Not the loneliness of her situation; not the darkness of the night, not the plashing of waves madly seeking their outlet to the sea; not the roar of the crocodile, hungry and eager for its prey, could frighten her from the spot. So much for her bravery.

“Come what come may, time and the hour runs through the roughest day.” Soon it appears not quite so dark; she begins to see the gray streaks of dawn, and soon all nature seems to breathe, and stretch itself for a glorious rising. Birds sing, the lowing herds come for water, and the glorious sunlight lights a

scene on that river such as has never been seen before or since. Voices are heard, "and the loud laugh which speaks the vacant mind,"—when the child looks, and lo, there comes a beautiful and queenly maiden with her attendants, rapidly approaching the very spot where the cradle floats. It is Themuthis, Pharaoh's daughter, coming for her morning bath. How the little heart beats as to what will be the result ! "What is this I see floating amid the rushes?" exclaims the princess. "A babe, a babe! It is a beautiful babe." "Bring him to me," she exclaimed. At once the little one is taken out of the cradle and rests in the lap of the queenly girl. "It must be one of the Hebrew children," she exclaims. "He shall be my pet. I shall call him Moses, because I have drawn him out of the water."

That was a sensible girl. Had she come down with a white rat or a poodle dog in her hands, she would have found no room for the baby boy, who had so won her heart. Julius Cæsar in passing through a certain city and seeing nearly every woman with a pet dog, asked if they had no babies in that place to play with. But now watch the shrewdness of Miriam. The moment she saw that the princess was pleased, and said it was one of the Hebrew children, she rushed from her concealment to the spot and exclaimed; "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" That was good logic. You say it is a Hebrew child, such should have a Hebrew nurse, therefore let me call a Hebrew woman. But now comes the smartest thing of all.

Having gained permission, "she went and called the child's mother." If Solomon ever did anything wiser than that, I don't know what it was. She then ran to her mother with the glad tidings, who came for the baby and took him home, where she kept him for a few years and then turned him over to the court of Pharaoh to be known as "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Thus are we indebted to Miriam for the preservation of Moses, the law-giver of the world.

We now lose sight of Miriam for twice forty years, during which time she doubtless lived with her parents, enduring all manner of hardships at the hands of the Egyptian taskmasters.

At the end of the first forty Moses left the Egyptian court, having killed an Egyptian for beating an Israelite, and gotten into other troubles on their account, and he fled into the land of Midian. Beautifully has it been said by the Apostle that "Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." In Midian he lived for forty years with his wife, Zipporah, whom he married there, till his call came to redeem Israel. God convinced him that he was to be his chosen leader by signs and wonders, and then sent him to Pharaoh with the demand that he should let the children of Israel go. Pharaoh refused until plague after plague coming in quick succession, he yielded; and Moses at the head of over 2,000,000 of people, with Aaron as high priest, and Miriam as his chief singer, set out for the land of promise.

We now behold Miriam as a gifted poetess. Men do not march well without music, not even the children of Israel. It is astonishing what an effect music has upon us all. The "Marseilles Hymn" has been more powerful in France than the sword of Napoleon, and the "Wacht am Rhein" a higher inspiration than the commands of Frederick the Great. If you wish all England to be thrilled you have but to sing "God Save the Queen," and America is always put upon her mettle by the "Star Spangled Banner," or the stirring strains of "Dixie."

The good that was done by Miriam as the sweet singer of Israel we can never know, but we may imagine it by her conduct at the passage of the Red Sea.

Although Pharaoh had consented that they might go, he yet followed them with his mighty hosts. Terrified, the children of Israel stood on the banks of the sea till they saw the clouds of dust and countless hosts coming. Then came the command from Moses to go forward, when the waters parted and they all went over safely, which Pharaoh and his hosts essaying to do, were drowned. Then the people gathered together on the other side and devoutly thanked God for His deliverance. Then Miriam's services were brought into requisition as never before. We can see her now, standing up leading the chorus and striking her timbrel, amid the joyous acclamations of the multitude. In the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, twenty and twenty-first verses, we read: "And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels

and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sir ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.' This was 600 years before Homer sang, but the word of Miriam will live when the blind bard shall have been forgotten. Oh, Mrs. Hemans, and Mrs. Browning, and Margaret Preston, and Mrs. Norton, you find your great prototype in her who sang: "The horse and his rider are thrown into the sea." The best interpretation of her song has been given by Thomas Moore:

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free,
Sing, for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave,
How vain was their boast, for the Lord had but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free."

Miriam, we see, was also a prophetess, and the first prophetess. God gave her the wonderful power of foretelling such future events as were necessary for his people in that primitive formative state. Women have been employed in the church in all ages. We read not only of Miriam, but of Hannah, and Huldah and Anna and other prophetesses, and also in the New Testament of deaconesses. I am somewhat in the opinion that in these latter days, sufficient prominence is not given to women in church works. The fact that Paul objected to their talking in church has acted as a barrier not only to their lips but also to

their lives. But there is no denying the fact that Miriam's prominence as a prophetess caused her to sin, and get into great trouble. The experience has been that the heads of ladies become dizzy by elevation. As little as it might be anticipated, this great woman fell into sin. She claimed that Moses was arrogating too much to himself, and that God spoke as much through her and Aaron as through him. This occurred in the wilderness of Zin, near to Sinai, and God, who was looking on, summoned all three into the tabernacle for an explanation. While He talked with them He was in the pillar of cloud, and when the cloud was lifted, Miriam, suddenly smitten with leprosy, was as white as snow. Her name, Miriam, the same as the New Testament Mary, means bitterness, and now her fate was indeed one of extreme bitterness.

The two brothers were thrown into the deepest distress, and Aaron implored Moses to intercede for her, which the injured man did. She was banished from the camp for seven days, during which time she thoroughly repented. It may interest you now to know what her sin was. It was first ambition; she desired to be great as a leader, consulted on all occasions. Have you never seen ladies in the church who would work nowhere except in the lead, and also endeavored to rule everything and everybody with whom they came in contact, beginning with their husbands, who fall an easy prey, and ending with an attempt to rule the whole community? Her sin was in the next place jealousy. She said to Aaron: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not also spoken by

us?" Jealousy is a terrible thing. Shakespeare calls it "the green-eyed monster that mocks the meat it feeds on." That such a sister as Miriam should be jealous of such a brother as Moses is beyond conception, but human nature in its best state is very frail. Jealousy is the apprehension of superiority, and the towering character of Moses doubtless disturbed her peace; and George Elliot well says that "one of the torments of jealousy is that it can never turn away its eyes from the thing that pains it."

What is the worst of all, ambition leads to jealousy and jealousy leads to evil speaking. Miriam took Aaron aside and spoke ill of Moses, but have not many of Miriam's sisters in after ages imitated her example? What is sadly true of modern Miriams is they do not speak evil of their brothers as much as they do of their sisters. It was a woman who said: "Heaven knows what would become of our society if we never visited people we speak ill of; we should all live like Egyptian hermits, in crowded solitude." How many a young lady, jealous of her rival, has perpetrated a slander against her from which she has never been able to recover? for

"Fling forth a lie among the crowd,
Let but the gossips vouch 'tis true,
Then innocence may buy her shroud
And guilt walk forth in garments new."

Paul puts evil speaking among the cardinal sins: "therefore put off all these, anger, malice, wrath, evil speaking."

But I am glad to say that the slanderer is not always successful, and by patience in well-doing a man or woman can live down the vilest vituperation of their enemies. The great river can have a dam thrust across it and its waters stopped temporarily, and the wind may dash its waters in a foam and spray, but the continuity will soon be resumed, and on the waters will roll again in majesty and splendor. So the best characters may be for the time interrupted, but they will emerge from the conflict brighter and grander than ever, while those who obstructed them will be swept into the gulf of infamy and oblivion.

In this case it was not Moses that suffered but Miriam. It very often happens that the shaft of the slanderer is a sort of boomerang that recoils upon himself.

“Like that strange missile that the Australian throws,
Your verbal boomerang slaps you on the nose.”

But there is recovery for the slanderer as well as for the slandered. After seven days’ confinement without the camp, Miriam was restored to her position as prophetess of Israel, doubtless better prepared than ever by her affliction to wake her lofty strains in behalf of her beloved people.

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,” says Shakespeare, “which like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head.” The flowers that are bruised shed forth the most delicious fragrance, and the nightingale sings never so sweetly as when it has been winged by some cruel and mischievous shot. A

young lady of matchless voice had been placed by her guardian under a celebrated French instructor. When her education had been completed he turned her over to her guardian, saying: "I have done all I can, there is but one thing necessary to make her perfect as a singer; she must be crushed by misfortune." Miriam crushed by her sorrows came forth to sing and prophesy as never before. Old, and weary after toils in the desert and approaching her end, she was indeed like the dying swan,

"Which sings at the last her own death lay
And in music and perfume dies away."

Full of years and honors and with but one painful recollection, and preceding her brother Aaron four months and her brother Moses six months to the silent realm, this good woman had to die. This is the common lot. Whether young maiden, old maid, wife or mother; whether living in a tent, a cottage or a palace, all must go into "the house appointed for all the living."

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power
And all that beauty, all that wealth 'ere gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour—
The path of glory leads but to the grave."

Miriam was buried at Kadesh Barnea, in the wilderness of Zin, where her sepulchre was still to be seen in the time of the historian Eusebius, a most noteworthy fact.

Like her illustrious brother, because of her sin, she was not permitted to enter the land of Canaan, but

she doubtless crossed the Jordan of death to enter a fairer Canaan on high. Hanging her timbrel on some shrub of the desert, where it would henceforth give forth no sound save as it was struck by the passing breeze, she rose to take her place in the choir of the angels, there through eternity to "sing the song of Moses and the Lamb."

Ladies, as you journey through the wilderness of this world, like Miriam, aid your brothers in their conflict with sin. Shed over them the sweetness of your songs. Let your lives be one grand anthem of inspiration for men and praise to God.

"So live that when thy summons come to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, when each shall take
Her chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of her couch
About her, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

A decorative monogram and floral border. The monogram features a stylized letter 'R' intertwined with a heart shape, surrounded by delicate floral vines and leaves. Below the monogram, the word 'RUTH.' is written in a bold, serif font, with a small decorative flourish at the end of the 'H'.

LECTURE VI.

RUTH, THE YOUNG WIDOW OF MOAB.

WHAT a wonderful book the Bible is! Why is it that men and women do not read it more? What is it that they could desire in any book that is not found on the sacred page? It was the illustrious John Milton who said "there are no politics like those the Bible teaches, no orations equal to those of the prophets, no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, and no biography like that recorded of scripture characters." Especially is his remark true as to female biography. There is not in the whole range of literature, sacred or profane, anything at all comparable in idyllic simplicity, tenderness, and beauty with the story of Ruth, the young widow of Moab. A distinguished literary gentleman of England was asked by some young ladies to read to them the most touching story he had ever seen. Substituting modern names for the real ones he read to them the book of Ruth. They were perfectly delighted with the story, said it was the finest they had ever heard and asked who was the author. This story stands in a book by itself, its canonical authority has never been questioned, but had it been produced as a work of fiction by Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson with some such title as "At

the Mercy of Boaz" it would have been eagerly devoured by tens of thousands and pronounced her masterpiece.

Young ladies ought to read the Bible. Only think of those English girls asking who was the author of the book of Ruth, believing it to be a novel. I was told once by a Montgomery matron that a young lady staying at her house, and affecting considerable pedantry, examined her library one day, and seeing a volume in it marked "Holy Bible!" exclaimed, "Holy Bible! Holy Bible! whose work is this? I think I have seen it before but forgot the author."

The more we examine the Bible the more we are convinced that its author was God, that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that "all Scripture is given by inspiration from God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

After the death of Moses and Aaron the children of Israel, already nearing the banks of the Jordan, after the forty years of pilgrimage, passed over and took possession of the land of Canaan. It became necessary that they should have a government; society in its most primitive and barbarous states has always found some government necessary. Any government is better than none at all, and the advocates of anarchy must ever be put down as a set of fool and cranks. In this case the people were directed by God, who ordered that Judges should be placed over them as

rulers. This name is applied to fifteen persons, who presided over the affairs of the Israelites during the four hundred and fifty years which elapsed from the death of Joshua to the accession of Saul. It was "when the judges ruled," that the history, now to be related, occurred, supposed to be about 1250 years before Christ.

Owing to a famine in the land of Canaan, a man high in position, by the name of Elimelech, concluded that he would emigrate with his family to Moab, a country in Arabia Petrea, in the hope of bettering his condition. How often is this done in our own country to the sorrow of those who attempt it. Tired of the worn lands, "the old red hills," of the eastern States, the cry is "go west," but after getting there they want nothing so much as money enough to return. Coming from Mobile the other day, there was a man with his wife and children on board, all looking the worse for wear, returning from Texas. Disgusted with Texas he was coming back to live and die on his native heath in Tennessee. "What do you think of Texas?" I asked. "It is a country," he said, "with more land and less timber, with more rivers and less water, with more cows and less milk, with more men and fewer women, with more work and less money, than any other part of the earth."

But Elimelech started off with his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Chilion and Mahlon. On getting to Moab it may be supposed that they lived happily for some time, but after awhile Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow in a strange land with her two sons.

Sad indeed is the condition of the aged widow. When the husband dies, she begins at once to decline.

“ When the stem dies, the leaf that grew
Out of its heart must perish too.”

In her desolation Naomi was sustained and comforted by her two sons, who, growing up to manhood, became enamored of two fine girls of Moab and married them. The name of Chilion's wife was Orpah, that of Mahlon, Ruth. While the Jewish law forbade their marriage outside of their own nation, in this instance they did not make a mistake. They lived together in the same home, a happy family, the two heathen girls embracing the religion of their husbands.

We may imagine that the wrinkles on the cheek of Naomi began now to disappear and her eyes to assume a brighter expression. But alas how little prescient we are in this life. The angel of death was again hovering over the once desolate home and soon both the sons died. “And the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.” Poor Naomi, how desolate was her condition now. The last prop on which she leaned was taken from her. The last ray of light that penetrated her beclouded life was gone and she was thrown into hopeless gloom. Old, grieved and helpless, with the widowed daughters-in-law on her hands, her thoughts turned to her old home, for she had heard that God had blessed Canaan and that the famine had been removed.

It is said when people grow old, when their powers decline, and they near the grave, that their thoughts

involuntarily and intuitively turn to their old home, the place where they were born and reared. The cottage rises in distinct outline before their vision "beneath the shelter of the aged tree;" again they see every loved object that once beguiled them,

"The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wildwood
And every loved spot that their infancy knew,"

and again they hear the merry childish voices of loved companions long since numbered with the dead. So it was with Naomi. In her dejection she thought of Bethlehem-Judah, its palm trees and fountains, and dear old friends whom she had not seen for years, and she resolved to go back.

But little preparation was necessary, and accompanied by her daughters-in-law she started on her journey.

She had not gone far before she thought that it would be unjust to her daughters-in-law to take them away from their own people to the strange land of Judea. Stopping in the path, she bade them return and generously expressed the hope that they might marry again and be happy. The young women were greatly disturbed at the suggestion and said: "Surely we will return with thee to thine own people." But Naomi insisted on their going back, saying that she was old and poor and helpless and could do no more for them. Orpah took her advice, and giving Naomi a kiss turned back and we hear of her no more forever. Not so with Ruth, for she said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for

whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die and there will I be buried." It is in this declaration that we behold the matchless beauty of the character of Ruth.

Witness in the first place her devotion to Naomi. Daughters-in-law and sons-in-law are not as a general thing distinguished for their devotion to their mothers-in-law. Some of the most cruel jokes that have been perpetrated in this world have been at the expense of mothers-in-law. Ruth shames this whole sacrilegious horde. It would be impossible for a husband to breathe to his wife, or a wife to her husband, language more earnest, passionate and loving, than Ruth poured into the ear of her mother-in-law on that occasion. To mothers-in-law are we indebted for the nurturing and rearing of those whom we say we hold dearer than life. Quite differently does a man talk after marriage from what he did when he took the old lady aside, and told her he would be eternally gratified if she would only confer upon him that richest treasure in the world, her fair daughter's hand, and making a thousand promises which he never fulfilled; we cannot wonder if she should look askant at him smiling, and would say as one once said that the Devil had a grudge against her and had paid her off in sons-in-law. Ruth said to Naomi "whither thou goest I will go." She was not only devoted to her mother-in-law, but to her mother-in-law's people. "Thy people shall be my people." It very often happens when people get married they ignore relatives altogether, especially if they

be poor kin. They seem to think that they have a perfect right to come into the family garden and pluck the fairest and most beautiful flower without any regard for the parent tree that is withered and blighted by the ruthless hand that has torn it away; or any thought for the other trees that have sheltered that flower from storm and sun that it might ripen into freshness and beauty. A man is a fool who would marry a woman who is ashamed of his own people, and *vice versa*. An incident in point is related of Senator Foster, of Connecticut, who was of humble parentage. His poor old father had denied himself in order to give his son a good education. He became a brilliant young lawyer, and had won the affections of a society belle to whom he was soon to be married. The night before the marriage he called to pay his last visit before the indissoluble tie was formed. Just before leaving she said: "There's one thing, Mr Foster, I want to say to you. I will go to see your parents once, but you must not expect me to repeat it. You know they are humble people, and my station in society is such that you should not expect it of me." The lion was suddenly roused in young Foster from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He paced the floor nervously for a few moments without saying a word. He was devoted to the girl and a great struggle was going on. At length turning to her he exclaimed: "Well, miss, in response to what you have just said all I've got to say is, You can go to Hong Kong, and I'll try and find somewhere a true woman." And so, taking his hat he left her presence

forever. He rose to be a United States Senator, while she pined in single blessedness. For man or woman to be ashamed of their relations is to exhibit a mean and ignoble nature, which stamps them as too contemptible to be respected by any honest human being. "Thy people shall be my people" is the noble sentiment of the patriot. That which will render the name of Benedict Arnold hated and despised forever is the fact that in the time of a great struggle he turned against his own people.

Before the war I attended a debate in the United States Senate, and heard a Senator disparage the State of Tennessee, and intimate that even her own representatives were ashamed of her. I can never forget the appearance of Andrew Johnson, as he rose to reply. After describing the part that State took in the establishment of the Union, and in wars in defense of the country, he hurled the allegations back with an eloquence that I have rarely heard equalled, and he concluded with these words: "Tennessee is my foster-mother, and with all the devotion of a loyal son, I say to her, whither thou goest I will go, where thou liest I will lie, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried."

It is often too true of many professors of religion that they will go with any church which will give them the most secular advantages. If they move into a community where their own denomination is weak and small, they will either keep their letters of membership in their pockets, or join the most powerful

church, it makes no difference what may be its principles—hypocrites that they are. To all such Ruth administers a withering rebuke when she says, “thy people shall be my people.”

She goes further—she expresses her devotion to Israel’s God. “Thy God shall be my God.” She had abandoned her own gods for the true God. Her worldly interest all lay in the direction of the heathen deities. Had she gone back she might have been a priestess at the altars of Baal, but she preferred slavery among “these people whose God is the Lord.”

Though she should die there she did not wish to be brought back. “Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.” Noble Ruth! Her example has inspired thousands of her sisters in after ages. It was this that inclined the daughter of the proud Presuli to say to her suffering Jaffier, “I will go with thee; though the bare earth be all our resting place, its roots our food, some cleft our habitation, I’ll make this arm a pillow for thine head, and as thou sighing liest and swelled with sorrow, creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love into thy soul and kiss thee to thy rest, then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.”

Finding it impossible to dissuade Ruth from going with her, Naomi and her fond daughter-in-law proceeded on their journey to the land of Canaan. When she came to Bethlehem she was heart broken at the contrast between her condition when she left and what it was now at her return, and sitting down, we

may imagine by a “well of water,” she wept bitterly. People from curiosity gathered round to see who the strangers might be, and soon discovering in her wrinkled face some traces of the happy wife of Elime-lech they said, “This is Naomi,” but she replied, “Call me not Naomi (which means pleasant), but call me Marah (which means bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.” How exactly did her experience coincide with many in this world of disappointment and change. How many a young bride has left the comfortable home of her opulent father, and gone with the man of her choice to some distant land to pine in poverty and wretchedness, till husband dead or deserting her, she comes back pale and wan with her little children in rags to exclaim, “I went out full but I have come back home again empty.” How many a wayward young man, like the prodigal son of the parable, has left his father’s house where there was bread enough and to spare, and going off into the fields of sin has wasted his substance in riotous living, and came back in rags and disgrace to exclaim, “I went away full but I have come back home again empty.”

How many a religious professor, once rich in the possession and exercise of the means of grace, has wandered from the fold, first neglecting the house of God, then prayer, then the society of the good, until he makes shipwreck of his faith and conscience, and comes back almost ruined, at last to exclaim:

“People of the living God
I have sought the world around,
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found.
Now, to you, my spirit turns,
Turns a fugitive unblest,
Brothers, where your altar burns,
O, receive me unto rest.”

“I went away full, but I have come back home again empty.” What would have become of Naomi had Ruth not been there, God only knows, but the ever faithful daughter-in-law, seeing that it was barley harvest, prepared to go out and glean the fields for their support, this being a privilege granted by the Jewish laws to very poor people. Ruth now became a working woman in earnest. The world is full of working women to-day, and among them are found some of the noblest, purest and most heathful of the female sex. I honor the women who, thrown upon their own resources, can work and take care of themselves and their loved ones of their own sex; but if there is anything disgusting in this world, it is to see a woman hard at work compelled to support a trifling, lazy vagabond of a husband. So far from such a creature being called a man, it would take about a dozen like him to make a respectable pygmy.

It so happened that Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz, a rich old bachelor of Bethlehem-Judah. Coming out into the field during the day he chanced to see the fair Ruth at work. He at once enquired of the overseer who she was, and being told, gave orders

that she should glean only in his field; that she alone might be permitted to "glean among the sheaves," and that the reapers must let some handfulls fall on purpose for her, that she must drink of their water and eat with them at dinner. Now, it may be said that Ruth went to the field with the purpose to entrap Boaz, and other young widows know how often they have suffered from similar remarks, but it is expressly stated that "it was her hope to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz." Again it may be said that Boaz had ulterior designs in being so charitable to Ruth, and the same unkind remark is made often about others who give their means to the cause of benevolence. But I give Boaz full credit for his charity. He cared for two poor widows, and the word of God tells us that "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." If Boaz was rewarded, it is nothing but what all men will be who give from a proper motive. Boaz parted with his barley, but to get good measure in return, and that is just what the Bible says: "Give and it shall be given to you again; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, heaped up and running over shall men give into your bosom." On going home and telling her mother all that had happened, Ruth was informed that Boaz was her kinsman, though not the nearest of kin, who, according to the Jewish law, was entitled to marry her, but if the nearest of kin could be gotten out of the way, Boaz should be her husband. The mother-in-law was in

earnest in the matter and requested Ruth to have a private interview with him on the subject, which she did, and returned with six measures of barley more. There was nothing wrong in this interview, although it would be regarded in bad taste now. Boaz said: "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." She was indeed "chaste as the icicle that's curded by the frost from purest snow and hangs on Dian's temple." There was one thing that specially pleased Boaz. She did not run after young men. He said to her: "Thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men." The truth is Ruth had rather be an old man's darling than a young man's slave. A young girl married an old man not long ago and gave this as her reason. He soon died leaving her \$200,000. Some one asked her what she proposed doing now. She said she would try to be a young man's slave.

The next day after the interview at the winnowing floor, Boaz arranged for the marriage. He took a position in the gates, "the place of concourse," secured the forfeiture of his right from the nearest of kin and agreed to be the husband of Ruth. Ten of the elders of Israel confirmed the marriage and wished God's blessing on the pair. Now look at the results! Ruth, the poor widow of Moab, became the rich wife of Boaz. She who had gleaned as a pauper now ruled as the chief lady of Bethlehem. But elevation did not make her head dizzy, as it does that of so many weak-minded women who "put on airs" and assume the utmost

consequence on the slightest favorable turn of the wheel of fortune. Let us not for one moment think that she forgot her beloved Mahlon, whose body rested in far-off Moab. He had been the vase in which had been distilled the fairest and most delicate flowers of her youth. He was dead but not forgotten.

“You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

But those tender memories did not prevail or interfere with her loyal and affectionate devotion to her new husband. The generous husband is always glad to see his wife cherish tender memories for her loved and lost ones. He is not jealous of ~~the~~ the living much less of the dead.

Neither did Ruth forget her poor old mother-in-law. Naomi never knew that bitter experience “how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” When a babe was born to Boaz and Ruth the women came to Naomi and said, “Thy daughter-in-law which lovest thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him,” and “Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it.”

Notice how Ruth was honored providentially. This child was Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, so that Ruth became the great grandmother of Israel’s poet King, and the ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was called “the son of David.” Jesus Christ is generally regarded as having only Jewish blood in his veins, but was it not necessary that he who was to be the Saviour of the

Gentiles as well as the Jews, should have an admixture of Gentile blood; this He did have through Ruth the Moabitish woman, and His great ancestor, Obed, was born in Bethlehem where, centuries after, He, a little infant wrapped in swaddling bands, lay in the manger. And as the infant Obed was the prototype of the coming infant Saviour, who will deny that the fair and lovely Ruth was the prototype of the Virgin Mary, blessed above women.

The name of Ruth is a household word. Thousands of American children bear it to-day, and who will say that it has not shed its lustre on our very literature. "Ruth" means mercy, tenderness for the suffering of others. Ruthless means the opposite,—cold, pitiless, cruel. Robert Burns has immortalized this word in connection with the wretches who would injure fair, virtuous woman.

"Is there in human form, that bears a heart,
 A wretch, a villain lost to love and truth,
 That can with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
 Betray sweet Jennie's unsuspecting youth?
 Curse on his perjured arts, dissembling smooth!
 Are honor, virtue, conscience all exiled,
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
 That paints the ruined maid and their distraction wild?"

Just one word in conclusion, "addressed to the ladies present." Each one of you may be a Ruth. It was not beauty of person that distinguished her, though many of you possess this. It is said of Eve, and Sarah, and Rebekah, and others, that they were "fair

to look upon." It is not so said of Ruth. It was beauty of character that immortalized her. You may all have this. You may possess modesty, that quality which so highly adorns a woman. You may be faithful, honoring your father and mother, that your days may be long, and useful, and happy. Above all, you may be pious. Whoever else may turn their backs on Christ, it should not be woman, for whom He has done so much. What Ruth said to Naomi, each of you should say to Him: "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, where thou lodgest, I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

DEBORAH.

LECTURE VII.

DEBORAH, THE STRONG-MINDED WOMAN.

IT has been my object in these lectures to present different types of female character as they appear in the Bible. Thus far you have considered Eve, the frail woman; Sarah, the obliging wife; Rebekah, the artful woman; Rachel, the lovely wife; Miriam, the grand and gifted woman; and Ruth, the dutiful daughter-in-law. Now you are to consider Deborah, the strong-minded woman. I use the term strong minded in its good, and not evil sense. I have no sort of sympathy with that strong mindedness, falsely so called, which has developed in certain parts of our country in the advocacy of all the odds and ends of isms, prominent among which is free loveism; which endeavors to assume all the functions of the male sex without its powers, and which it seems will be satisfied with nothing less than trousers, high top boots, and whiskers, all of which finds its representatives in such persons as Dr. Mary Walker, Woodhull, Claflin & Co. From all these, who are forever shrieking for woman's suffrage, and other woman's rights, good Lord deliver us; but while for ordinary woman the true sphere is home, and her

highest exaltation to be queen of the affections; while her sweetest charm is humility,

“The low sweet root
From which all heavenly virtues shoot;”

yet, there is no denying the fact that God has made some women strong physically and mentally, yea stronger in many instances than strong men, and destined for the performance of great actions, on the world's stage. I have seen many such an one with “an eye like Mars to threaten and command a station like the herald Mercury, a combination and a form indeed where every god did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of a man,” in woman's form. So far from deterring such, I would give them the utmost facilities for the exhibition of their prowess. If a woman can do anything better than I can—think, speak and act better than I can, I but stand aside and in the presence of her superior powers cheerfully hide my diminished head. Such a woman was Deborah. She could (and I here indicate the plan of this discourse) prophesy, agitate, fight, write, and rule as few women or men in this world have done.

First she could prophesy. She was called of God to be the medium of communication between Himself and his people Israel. The gift of prophesy is a wonderful gift and necessarily stamps its possessor as inspired. To be able to light the veil of the future and reveal what lies behind is a prerogative belonging only to God, or to those whom God has directly inspired. We behold Deborah for the first time in a tent under a well-

known palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, stately in person with her dark penetrating prophetic eyes "in a fine phrenzy rolling." To her the people came from all parts of the land for wisdom and instruction; it is a good thing to be instructed by such a woman; I have sometimes thought that almost all women are prophetesses; they can certainly come as near telling what is going to happen as any beings on earth, and this very fact perhaps gives the wandering gypsies their importance as fortune-tellers; a woman's intuitions are better than a man's reasonings; when your wife tells you not to do a thing don't you do it; had Cæsar taken the advice of his wife Calpurnia he had never been assassinated; had Pontius Pilate taken the advice of his wife he had not signed the death warrant of the Saviour of the world. The office of a prophetess was a high office; it was that to which the ministry of the gospel corresponds at this day. "He gave some prophets and some apostles and some pastors and teachers," and the question is well worth your attention: if a woman had the right to prophesy under the former dispensation may she not have the right to preach under the present?

Deborah could do more than prophesy: she could agitate; she could stir up the people; she came into power after the reign of Ehud; Israel had gone to decay; the land was debauched and almost ruined; the liberties of the people had all expired under the oppression of the Canaanites; men were faint-hearted and cowardly, for their spirits were broken and their hopes gone. But she, with an eloquence like that of

Patrick Henry when he woke the echoes of revolution on the plains of Virginia, called upon her people to throw off the yoke of tyranny, "or nobly die the second glorious part." And who, let me ask, began the mightiest agitation that this country has ever known, that which is now shaking the land from centre to circumference, making editors nervous in their chairs and senators tremble in their boots; who is it that started the prohibition wave that is likely to roll on till the stains of intemperance are washed away, and liquid fires are forever extinguished. It was woman. And when woman takes hold of any enterprise she never lets go till it is accomplished. The timid Macbeth may retire shrinking from the deed, but there is a Lady Macbeth with unconquerable nerve to exclaim, "Give me the dagger, the living and the dead are as pictures." So with Deborah.

To agitation must succeed the struggle. She could fight. Some people think that a woman's only weapon is a broomstick; let them not be deceived, or they may be met in their paths by the dagger of a Charlotte Corday or Kate Southern. Deborah sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kedesh, a city of Naphtali, and told him it was God's will that he should lead her forces and undertake the deliverance of her country. He hesitated, discouraged by repeated failures, and long slavery, but at length replied that he would go provided she would go with him. Poor Barak, like many other men, he wanted to be tied to a woman's apron strings. The brave Deborah said that she would go with him, but that a woman, instead of himself,

should receive the honor of the victory. Israel was now in the power of Jabin, king of Hazor, which was his capital. He had a vast army, more than ten times the size of the Israelites, with 900 chariots of iron fixed with scythes to mow down the people. Their general in command was Sisera, a mighty man of war, who had been the terror of Israel for many years. Having heard of the purpose of Deborah he had collected his army and encamped in the great plain of Esdraelon on the banks of the river Kishon. Deborah's army, consisting of 10,000 men, (the forces of Zebulon, Naphtali and Issachar) was drawn up at Mount Tabor, from which doubtless her prophetic mind drew the loftiest inspiration. It was here that, centuries after, the Son of God was to appear with Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration scene, and when all mists enveloping them, rolling away, the attendant disciples, Peter, James and John, were to behold "Jesus only." Looking forth from the summit she could behold the uncounted hosts of the enemy, forming the dark and forbidding background of one of the loveliest panoramas that the world ever saw. But the eventful moment came. At the command of Deborah, herself leading the van, with Barak at her side, "silently down from the mountain crown the great procession swept." The hundred thousand Canaanites advanced to meet them, with the plume of Sisera waving in front, and twice 900 horses drawing 900 iron chariots of the nobility. A less dauntless spirit than that of Deborah would have quailed. But "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." At this critical moment there

came a great hail storm which pelted the Canaanites in the face till they could not see. Then the rain began to fall in torrents. The very bottom seemed to have dropped out of heaven, and the pent-up floods deluged the enemy. The little streams became rivers, the Kishon an angry sea, and the plain an impenetrable morass. The chariots and horsemen, tangled in the confusion, became destructive to their owners. The torrents swept away thousands. Those that were not drowned precipitately fled till overtaken by the pursuing Israelites, and between Mt. Tabor and Little Hermon a battle was fought so destructive to the Canaanites that the corpses of the slain filled the air with stench and enriched the soil for miles. Like the Gauls, defeated by Camillus, not one was left to tell the disastrous story to their countrymen. Like the hosts of Pharoah engulfed in the Red Sea, the hosts of the Canaanites were overwhelmed in the swollen Kishon.

Now the prophecy was fulfilled that not Barak but a woman should have the glory of the victory. Sisera, escaping from his chariot when defeat became inevitable, fled to the tent of Heber, a descendant of Hobah, the father-in-law of Moses, who happened to live there preserving friendly relations with Israelites and Canaanites. Jael, wife of Heber, seeing him coming ran out to welcome him and invite him in. He accepted the invitation, and throwing himself down exhausted on the floor, she placed a mantle over him. She gave him buttermilk as a pledge of hospitality and tried to compose him to sleep. He said he could not sleep till she promised to conceal him from his foes. This she

agreed to do and he slept soundly. Poor Sisera, enjoy thy slumbers whilst thou canst, for thou shalt pass from the repose of sleep to the repose of death! Death's counterfeit shall be changed to reality before to-morrow, for "ne'er shall sun that morrow see." As soon as he was thoroughly asleep Jael took one of the large tent nails in her left hand and a great mallet in her right and creeping up stealthily and placing it against his temple, with one tremendous blow sent it crashing through bone and muscle and brain and passing through impaled him to the earth. He groaned and expired. "At her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed there he fell down dead." She then waited for Barak and claimed the glory of slaying Sisera. Who would ever have thought of that device but a woman? Shakspeare says, "she can smile and smile and be a villain." But not all are as successful as Jael. Not long since I read of a man who died suddenly and was buried in the midst of friends, his wife being chief mourner. The widow seemed greatly distressed. One man attended the funeral who had suspicion that all was not well, still he said nothing. The widow soon married a wealthy gentleman and was a prominent figure in society. Ten years after, a notice appeared in the papers that the bodies in that graveyard would be removed to another. The suspicious man was there again. When the body referred to was disinterred he asked the privilege of examining it. Looking into the skeleton's ear he saw the head of a large nail; drawing it out and wrapping it in his handkerchief, with some witnesses, he proceeded to the elegant

home of the former wife, and slowly removing the handkerchief held out the nail asking, "Do you know anything of that?" whereupon she exclaimed, "The very nail with which I killed him," and fainted. Murder will out even when confined by tenpenny nails. I mention that incident as a warning to women, lest some disagreeable husbands might have the misfortune to have their ears pierced in imitation.

But it is said that these are not the kind of nails that women generally use in their quarrels, but finger nails, and while not so deadly for execution, they are often fully as effective for defence. Many a man who tries to tyrannize over a fair and delicate woman, and lays his rude hand upon her, finds a match such as he little anticipated. All such are happily represented by the fable, which says that an eagle soaring aloft beheld what he supposed was a timid and tempting rabbit on the ground. Swooping down, "I shall have a good breakfast," he said, taking the animal in his talons, and bearing it aloft to his eyrie. On getting there and lighting he looked at his prey and found that instead of a rabbit he had an old grey cat, which placing one paw on one side and another on the other, and clasping his neck in her mouth said, "Now, you old villain, just treat me kindly, and take me back, right back where you got me from, or I will make mince meat of you, and sleep on your feathers," whereupon the discomfited eagle flew carefully back and put her catship right where he got her from.

MORAL:—Be sure your rabbits are not cats.

This Deborah destroyed the Canaanites. Her name

“Deborah” means “a bee;” and while she gathered honey for her friends, she had a fatal sting for her enemies. Let no one say, after her exploits, that women cannot fight. Some of the most remarkable deeds of daring on record have been performed by women. History furnishes no parallel to the war-like Amazons of South America, who, to throw off the galling tyranny of brutal men, banded themselves together and fought like tigresses. England will never forget the bold deeds of Margaret of Anjou, who at the head of her northern forces swept over the country like a cyclone, destroying armies and tearing down thrones; while in France Joan of Arc heads the list of military wonders. A peasant girl of eighteen years, while tending flocks in Lorraine, she conceived the idea that she was destined to restore happiness to her distracted country by crowning Charles king. After an examination by ecclesiastical courts and universities, impressing all with the fervor of her genius and the purity of her character, she was granted permission to lead the king’s army. Equipped with a complete suit of armor and a consecrated sword, she put herself at the head of 10,000 troops, threw herself upon the English who were besieging Orleans, routed them and compelled them to retire. Other victories followed in quick succession; her consecrated banner striking terror into the hearts of her enemies, as if some mighty Nemesis had just descended from the skies, bent on their destruction. In three months Charles was crowned king at Rheims, Joan of Arc, the heroine of his many battles, standing in full armor at his side. It

will ever be a stigma on the French nation that she was burned at the stake. For ten years after her death it was officially declared that she died “a martyr to her religion, her country and her king.” Her ashes were thrown into the Seine; the Seine bore them to the sea, and the sea took them around the world. Thus the ashes of Joan of Arc (like those of the Martyr Wyckliffe) are emblematic of her world-wide fame. In Augustinia “the maid of Saragossa, Spain,” furnishes a female warrior who shed undying lustre on her country.

Deborah, my heroine, could also write. It has been said of Julius Cæsar, the author of the “Commentaries on the Gallic War:” “Eodem scripsit, eodem quo bellavit”—(he wrote with the same ability with which he fought). The same remark is true of Deborah. After her victory over Sisera she composed a song, which has come down to us entire, which may be regarded as the finest specimen of ancient Hebrew poetry extant, if, indeed, it has been equalled by any modern production. I have not time to reproduce her glowing words, but they may be read in the fifth chapter of Judges. Her song ranks with, and is even superior to, the celebrated song of Miriam.

Literary women have been severely criticised and sneered at as “blue stockings,” but there is not a language that has not been enriched by productions of women. When was there ever a more powerful and passionate poet than Mrs. Browning? Next to her comes Mrs. Hemans, Jean Ingelow and our own Mrs. Sigourney and Mrs. Preston, and Mrs. Welby, “the

Grape Hill poetess." Where will you find a greater novel writer than "George Elliot," or a greater historian than Agnes Strickland? And these are but a few names from the galaxy of female writers that have shed their light upon the literature of the world.

Whether true or not, it has been popularly believed that some of the finest productions of orators, statesmen, editors and preachers have been the effusions of their cultured wives. They were kept in the background while their less talented partners soared aloft with borrowed plumage. Critics seem to take a peculiar pleasure in aiming their shafts at women. Here in our own Alabama we have a brilliant genius—Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson—whose works are ridiculed and criticized by thousands, who at the same time devour them with such avidity and pleasure that the publishers cannot keep the demand supplied.

There was one other thing that Deborah could do; she could rule. I have no doubt she ruled her husband. She is called "the wife of Lapidoth," and that is all that is said or that we know of that interesting individual. His whole importance in life seemed to arise from the fact that he was the husband of a great woman. His very name is in the original Hebrew put not in the masculine, but in the feminine gender. I have no doubt that while by no means so great, he was yet "as meek as Moses."

When a weak man marries a woman who is strong-minded (and sometimes when she is strong-bodied) he must make up his mind to be ruled by her. The truth is in the very nature of things, it can't be helped. The

less cannot expect to control the greater—a pigmy cannot hope to rule a giant. But when these strong-minded women are like Deborah, it is a blessed thing that they do rule their inferior companions. An ancient hen-pecked king of Athens put the ruling power farther back. He said his baby ruled the world, and on being asked how that was said, “Greece ruled the world, and Athens rules Greece, and my wife rules me, and my baby rules my wife.” Deborah’s rule was direct and immediate, and there is recorded no word of complaint from Lapidoth. He dared not complain.

But Deborah was a great political ruler. Being the fifth judge, she ruled all Israel. Seated under the palm tree which bore her name, and is elsewhere called “the sanctuary of the palm,” she dispensed justice and judgment and mercy to the Israelites. She ruled well, for after the victory over her foes, “the land had rest for forty years.”

The Bible says “Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child,” but it is not so said in regard to woman. The ruler of the mightiest monarchy in this world is a woman, and sad will it be for England, I fear, when the benign reign of Queen Victoria shall pass away.. George Francis Train says that “women who rule in monarchies should vote in republics.” If all the women were like Deborah or Queen Victoria, I would agree with him, but I am not yet in favor of woman suffrage. Instead of giving votes to women, I would take them away from the majority of men.

While Deborah was a great prophetess, a great agitator, fighter, writer and ruler, she was distinguished

for another thing more important than all the rest; and that was piety. "She was a mother in Israel," and that well-known phrase had its origin with her. She says in her own poetic strain:

"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the ways lay desert,
And highway travelers went in winding by-paths;
Leaders failed in Israel: they failed
Until that I, Deborah, arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.'

Her piety was the source of her power. Without it she could never have succeeded. The same remark is applicable to every other woman. Their strength lies in God. When women band themselves together for the accomplishment of any work they generally succeed, because they begin their efforts with prayer, and prayer moves the arm that moves the universe.

Piety is also the source of woman's highest adornment. An ornament of grace unto her head and chains about her neck. While Deborah sat under the palm tree she was not only invested with power to rule Israel well, but with that grace divine which diffused itself like a sweet-smelling savor over the whole land. And right here we must bid her adieu. After a noble and brilliant career she vanishes from our sight "like the moon, which leaves behind her departing chariot a long line of silver clouds, as she goes in her serene loveliness to give light and beauty to other lands."



JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

LECTURE VIII.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER, THE CONSECRATED MAIDEN.

MY design in this lecture is to relieve the Scriptures of the stigma that rests upon them, by what I conceive to be a false version of the story of Jephthah's daughter, and to hold up that noble maiden as an example for the whole world.

The subject is a dramatic one. The first person to be introduced is Jephthah, the son of Gilead, a prince of the half tribe of Manasseh, by a concubine. He resembled Ishmael as to his parentage, and Esau in being hated by his brothers, and cheated out of his birthright. When he became of age his brothers, despising him for his irregular birth, drove him away from home and appropriated his patrimony. He fled to the land of Tob on the borders of Arabia, and became a daring freebooter, like the English Robin Hood or a chief of the ancient Scottish border, or a Sheik of the African desert. A crowd of adventurers, ancient Bedouins that they were, flocked to his standard, and led by Jephthah made desperate raids upon surrounding tribes. It was not deemed dishonorable at that time to plunder private or public enemies.

The next person to be introduced is a beautiful young girl known as Jephthah's daughter, an only child who lived at his home in the town of Mizpah, on the borders of Canaan. To this daughter he was devotedly attached. On his return from predatory excursions, the smile would ever come back to his lip and the light to his bloodshot eye, as she would run to meet him and entwine her arms around his sunburnt neck. Shakespeare, in selecting an example of paternal tenderness, seizes upon Jephthah in the scene between Hamlet and Polonius.

“Hamlet: O, Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure had'st thou!

“Polonius: What a treasure had he, my lord?

“Hamlet: Why, one fair daughter and no more, the which he loved passing well.”

Thus lived the bold marauder, enjoying the exciting scenes of his wild, nomadic life by day and the repose of home by night. Not long, however, was he permitted thus to remain; Cincinnatus was called from the field: Jephthah was to be summoned from the forest to defend his country.

After the death of Jair, the reigning judge at the time of Jephthah's expulsion, the children of Israel sank into the most fearful idolatry. They forsook the God of their fathers and worshiped idols, the gods of the heathen tribes among whom they lived. The consequence was that God deserted them and the land was overrun by the Ammonites and Philistines. They groaned under a bondage as great as that which the ancient taskmasters of Egypt forced upon their

ancestors. They repented, turned to God, and resolved that they would throw off the yoke of their oppressors or die in the attempt. But the great question was where could they get a leader? All eyes at once turned to Jephthah, whose daring exploits were well known, and whose fame was a household word in Israel. The elders of Israel resolved to send a deputation to him to secure his services. This was not the last time that a great country has appealed to an exiled citizen for help. Rome banished Coriolanus, but yet, when he was marching at the head of his conquering legions, sued for mercy at his feet, which he granted only to the deputation of women, headed by his mother, saying: "O my mother, you have saved Rome, but lost your son." Camillus was banished by Rome, but when the Gallic hosts came down to destroy the city, the exiled hero was implored to return, and take command of the Roman forces, which he did, and so destroyed Brennus and his army that not a single one was left to tell the story of defeat.

Thus was the appeal made to Jephthah, and he was told, by way of conciliating him, that he should be made commander in chief of the armies of Israel. He replied that he would accept provided at the end of the war, if successful, he should be made judge of Israel, as he said he wished to provide against future banishment by his ungrateful countrymen. His terms were accepted, and he went to work at once to collect his army. He then acted in a most dignified way, demanding of the Ammonites the "*casus belli*" for which they had invaded Israel. They replied that it

was their original possession of the land, which had been taken from them by the Amorites. Jephthah then laid down a principle which has ever since prevailed in the law of nations, that having taken the land by conquest from the actual possessors their right was absolute and prior claims could not be respected.

The Ammonites would not yield, and Jephthah said they must then appeal to the god of battles. The armies on both sides being ready, Jephthah set out from Mizpah to meet the enemy. Before doing so, however, he made a solemn vow to God, which though rashly done developed the strong religious character of the man. He said: "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." While he has been severely criticised for his course, yet such vows were very often made by generals in ancient times. When Carthage contended with Rome for the mastery of the world, Hamilcar the father of Hannibal took his young son to the altar of his country's gods and made him swear eternal hostility to hated Rome, and the whole intrepid and brilliant career of Hannibal in after years showed how well and faithfully he kept his vow. Constantine made a vow when he went out to meet Maxentius, and the fact that the cross was ever afterwards displayed as the banner of the Cæsars shows how well he kept it.

Thus committed to God, Jephthah went forth to

the conflict, overwhelmed the Ammonites and came out grandly victorious. He continued until twenty cities capitulated. Elated with victory, while all Israel was rejoicing, and accompanied by a few faithful soldiers, he turned his footsteps towards his long-neglected home. The excitement of battle having subsided, he now thinks of his vow, and the inspiring thoughts of victory are displaced by gloomy forebodings as to what object shall greet him on his return to Mizpah. He looks up, and behold at the door of his house comes his own, his only beloved daughter. "Behold his daughter came forth to meet him with timbrels and dances; and she was his only child." All at once he awakes to his true situation. His father's heart is wrung with bitterness. "Better," he says, "be an outcast from home, driven from my father's house and hated by my brethren, better an exile in a foreign land, better a life on the wild trackless mountains among thieves and robbers, the roots my food, some cliff my habitation, better defeat and death upon the battle field than to give up my loved, my only child," and he exclaims, "Alas my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and cannot go back."

The girl nobly consented to the sacrifice and "he did with her according to his vow." A majority of the theologians believe in the literal execution of this vow. Poets and painters picture the scene on the banks of Jordan. The altar is erected, the wood placed upon it, and the fair young girl clothed in white, emblematic of her purity, is placed upon the fatal pile.

A prayer is offered, the father stands weeping as if his heart would break, the high priest with black robes and beard sweeping his aged breast plunges the knife into her heart, while the flames quickly consume her body. The willows bend their funeral foliage o'er her ashes and the dark waters of the Jordan murmur a requiem for the innocent victim. From this sad view I am forced to dissent. That such a deed could be performed by a pious father, a servant of God, a judge of Israel, who had been commended by the apostle for having the Spirit of God upon him, is too preposterous and horrible a thought for a moment's consideration. While Kitto, Dr. Smith and others assert the contrary, yet in my judgment the most sensible view has been presented by Dr. Hales, who says that our version has a false translation, and he puts it in this way: "He vowed a vow unto the Lord and said if thou wilt surely give the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall either be the Lord's or I will offer it up for a burnt offering." The vow consisted of two parts according to this view. 1. What person soever met him should be the Lord's, or dedicated to his service. 2. What beast soever met him should be offered as a burnt offering to the Lord. That he could not have sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering the following considerations are urged: 1. The sacrifice of children to Moloch was an abomination prohibited by an express law, and not an instance occurred of a human sacrifice to God. 2. The

case of Abraham offering Isaac is not in point, as Isaac was not sacrificed, but the command was given only to try Abraham's faith. 3. No father could put even a criminal child to death without consent of the magistrates. 4. The traditional laws of the Jews say: "If a Jew should devote his son or his daughter, his man servant or maid servant who are Hebrews, the devotement would be void."

But it may be asked what was the devotement to which Jephthah consigned his daughter? I answer it was celibacy: that she should henceforth serve in the tabernacle as a virgin. It seems to me that this is almost expressly stated, for when the girl consented that the vow should be put into execution she said: "Let me alone two months that I may go up and down upon the mountains and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows." To agree never to marry was the greatest sacrifice that could be made by a Jewish maiden, for she thereby gave up her hope of becoming "a mother in Israel," and the possible mother of the Redeemer of the world, and yet such sacrifices on the part of young women were often made in all religions. The ancient Pagans had their vestal virgins, the Roman Catholics have their nuns, and the Jewish religion was not an exception, for in the division of the spoils taken in the first Midianite war, of the whole number of captive virgins, "the Lord's tribute was thirty-two persons," as we read in Numbers xxxi. 35, 40. The argument for celibacy is complete, I think, when it says she returned from the mountains to her father, "who did with her according to his vow he had vowed, and she knew no man."

But what I wish to call your attention to specially is the conduct of the girl under this trying ordeal. When her father told her of the cruel vow, she said: "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." Such piety, such self denial, such devotion you will not find in the whole range of literature sacred or profane, so that I regard Jephthah's daughter as the type of consecrated woman the world over. First she was consecrated to her home. Had she been like some of our modern girls, Jephthah would not have found her there perhaps, but out shopping, or driving, or, if at night, at a dance. I have no doubt but that her home was neat and cleanly, and that she was like a sunbeam streaming through it, or a canary bird singing in it. Some girls don't like home, and when there keep everything in disorder and confusion. Young ladies, if you would imitate Jephthah's daughter, make home happy. Be not a discordant element there. "Our homes are like instruments of music, the strings that give melody or discord are the members. If each is rightly attuned they will all vibrate in harmony, but a single discordant string jars through the instrument, and destroys its sweetness." Among the highest injunctions of the apostle to women was that they should be "keepers at home."

This Jewish maiden was also devoted to her country. We can imagine as her father had been driven out and compelled to erect his home away from the land of her nativity, that she would have turned against her own people. But no! she illustrated the splendid

sentiment of the patriot, "My country, may she always be right; but right or wrong, my country." Women are never traitors. You may read of a Benedict Arnold, but never of a woman who was untrue to her country. This girl endured privations that her father might go to the war, and doubtless he was followed by many an earnest prayer for his success. When he returned she went out to meet him like Miriam with timbrels and dances, accompanied by a chorus of virgins to celebrate the deliverance of her country from the hand of oppression. When she found that the victory had been given in response to a vow in which she was concerned, she said "do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, for as much as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon." Noble girl. History, thank God, is full of illustrations of the patriotism of women.

Virginia submitted to be stabbed to the heart by her father, Virginius, rather than fall into the hands of the enemies of her country. The Carthaginian girls cut off their beautiful tresses to be made into bow strings for their lovers to fight with. The Spartan mothers told their sons to come back victors or be borne back on their shields. The southern women showed their patriotism during the war between the States by giving up their sons cheerfully who went to the front; by toiling in hospitals and in many instances giving up their jewels for the cause; and now that the war is over by keeping alive the memory of our dead heroes. God grant that our men may be

patriotic; that inspired by the noble example of woman they may feel for America what Robert Burns felt for Scotland when he said:

‘O, thou who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed through Wallace’s undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die the second glorious part,
O never, never Scotia’s realm desert:
But still the patriot and the patriot bard
In bright succession raise her ornament and guard.’

In the next place, she was consecrated to her father. While Jephthah loved his daughter, she loved him with a love that knew no bounds. His own strong and tender hand had nurtured the tender plant until it flowered into beauty, and now the sweetest fragrance she exhaled was for him who stood nearest to her. N. P. Willis beautifully says that the love of a sister for a brother is great,

“ But the affection of a delicate child
For a fond father, gushing, as it does,
With the sweet springs of life, and pouring on
Through all earth’s changes, like a river’s course,
Chastened with reverence and made more pure
By the world’s discipline of light and shade—
‘Tis deeper—holier.”

Daughters should respect the wishes of their fathers, and, like this girl, never marry without their consent. There is no pang which can equal in bitterness that of a father’s heart when compelled to give up his daughter in marriage, and when forced to do so against his consent a blow is inflicted upon the finer feelings

of his nature from which he can never recover. Still, I have no sympathy with those fathers who turn their backs on their daughters who, over-persuaded perhaps, marry men whom they do not like. If there be a word in the English language that I hate, it is the word "disinherited," as applied to children. "Blood is thicker than water," and it becomes the father to say to his child under the most afflictive circumstances:

"I know not, I ask not if guilt's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee whatever thou art."

But let children all remember that "Honor thy father and thy mother," was a command spoken amid the thunders of Sinai, and must ever remain a part of God's moral law. What should be especially remarked in Jephthah's daughter is that she honored her father's vow. "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth." Children should all honor the vows their parents have made for them at a throne of grace. On bended knees they have been dedicated to God.

The most touching stanza in the Cotter's Saturday Night is when the parents pray

That he who stills the raven's clamorous nest
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide.
And chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside."

There is not a child of pious parents here to-night but can say with David: "Thy vows, O God, are

upon me," and these vows cannot be paid without the co-operation of the children.

This remark leads to the last, that Jephthah's daughter was consecrated to her God. She was not compelled to respect her father's rash vow. It was the law of the Jews that no person could be devoted to any purpose except by their free and voluntary consent. But with a piety that has been seldom equalled and never excelled she said: "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth," and after two months' wailing on the desolate mountains, the wreck of her hopes, she entered the tabernacle for life, not to be offered as a burnt offering, but to keep alive the sacrificial fires, nobler, holier and purer than those that glowed in the temple of Vesta. No wonder that her sisters in Israel honored her devotion and appointed a four days' festival during each year to celebrate it. I thank God for consecrated women. From the time of Jephthah's daughter to the present day the world has not been without them. One of them, Anne Hasseltine Judson, sleeps beneath the Hopia tree at Amherst in Burmah. Another lies on St. Helena with this inscription written by her husband:

"She sleeps sweetly here on this rock of the ocean
Far away from her friends, and the home of her youth,
Far away from the land where with heartfelt devotion,
She scattered the bright beams of truth."

Another, Mrs. Philips, lies mouldering in the sands of Africa. Mrs. Comstock, in parting with her children

whom she sent to America while she remained in far off China, exclaimed, as she kissed them good bye forever, "O Jesus, this I do for thee." Others are to-day toiling in China, India, Japan, Africa and the islands of the sea. Still others are working in our churches holding up the hands of pastors, looking after the poor and needy, and by every means in their power winning souls to Christ. Without the aid of consecrated women the prospects of the church, the future of Christianity, would be gloomy indeed.

But alas, alas! from many of the fair sex we get no help. They are devoted, but devoted to what? To the theatre, the ball room, to the follies of fashion, and some offer themselves as willing victims on the altars of Mammon, so that even Lord Byron had to exclaim:

" Maidens like moths are ever caught by glare,
And Mammon wins the way where seraphs might despair."

And who is responsible for this devotement? It may have occurred to you that nothing is said in the record of the mother of Jephthah's daughter. Perhaps she was a wicked woman. Certain it is that many of God's distinguished servants had wives unworthy of them. Job's wife told him to "curse God and die." Lot's wife looked back to the delights of Sodom and became a pillar of salt, and perhaps while Jephthah was devoting his daughter to God she was worshiping at the shrine of Baal; and are there not mothers to-day who, instead of leading their daughters in the paths of righteousness and peace, are turning them over body and soul to the "God of this world," im-

molating their moral natures on the altar of Moloch; and themselves acting as chaperones, forming for them social clubs and matrimonial alliances that may be described as "leagues with death and covenants with hell." Such mothers are a curse rather than a blessing, and in the records of virtue their existence, like Jephthah's wife's, must ever remain a mystery and their name a blank!

I do not hesitate to say that the greatest lesson taught by Jephthah's daughter is the duty of parents to carry out their obligations in training their children aright. Young ladies, I make my closing appeal to you. The mantles of the mothers of our Israel will soon fall upon you. Will you be prepared for them? I do not ask that you offer yourselves as a burnt offering, or that you devote your lives to celibacy, but I do ask that, whether married or single, you shall be pious, and useful. Thus can you best honor Jephthah's daughter, thus you will shine over life an image worthy of such a mirror; and when at last you are laid in the cold and silent tomb, from your pure and uncontaminated flesh, like that of the fair Ophelia, sweet violets may spring, and the memory of your good deeds will shed their fragrance on the world forever.

D
ELILAH.

LECTURE IX.

DELILAH, THE FALSE WIFE OF SAMSON.

HOW long before you speak about the men? said a lady to me a few nights ago: "You have told us a great deal about women and we are anxious to hear about the men of the Bible." I replied that I had been speaking of the men all along; that it was impossible to discuss women without bringing in the other sex, for wherever the women appear the men present with them must necessarily be sketched. How could I describe Eve without speaking of Adam; or Rebekah and not tell of Isaac; or Miriam and not mention Moses and Aaron; or Ruth and not speak of Mahlon and Boaz; or Deborah and not mention Lapidoth and Barak; or Jephthah's daughter and not describe Jephthah; or Delilah and not speak of Samson, the most wonderful man of any age or country. He has been compared to the Grecian Hercules, and the resemblances are so exact that many believe that the Greeks stole their deity from the Bible, and if this be true it shows how universally the ancient Word of God was diffused among men. The story of Samson I am ready to admit reads like a fable, but that he was a true servant of God we know from the fact that his birth was announced to his mother by the Angel,

Jehovah; that he was miraculously supported in his achievements, and that he is put down in the "roll call of faith," in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as one of whom the world was not worthy, classed with Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets and others, "who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." But as an old writer remarks, it must be confessed that he was a "rough believer." He was noted for his great bravery, miraculous physical powers and moral infirmities. He was raised up especially by God for the deliverance of his people from the Philistines, who had oppressed them for forty years. God had before given Gideon, Barak and Jephthah as leaders of armies, but he designed Samson to be an army in himself. He was ordained by God to be a Nazarite; one of a class of men who by solemn vow agreed to abstain from wine and strong drink, and all kinds of leavened food, and to wear long hair as a badge of his devotion. God ordered that a razor should never touch the head of the young deliverer, and his hair was to be not really the source and seat of his strength, but the evidence that the compact which God made with him should stand. Long haired men at this day, such as Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, and the cow boys, do not strike us as being the most abstemious and pious of men, but Samson was a true Nazarite. Living adjacent to the Philistines, Samson was in a situation to make frequent raids upon them, and harass them into conflicts from which his prowess would enable him to come off victorious.

Becoming enamored of a Philistine maiden, he was on his way to see her, when he was attacked by a lion from the vineyards, and without any weapon took up and rent it to pieces as if it had been a kid. On his way to his wedding feast he passed the carcass of the lion and discovered a swarm of bees in it. It was the custom at feasts to entertain the guests with riddles, and Samson wagered thirty tunics and thirty changes of raiment that he could propose a riddle which the thirty groomsmen could not solve. This was the riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The young men having tried in vain, and being allowed seven days, prevailed upon Samson's wife to tell them what it was, and when he returned and asked for the answer they said: "What is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion." Samson became angry and said: "If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle," and went away and slew thirty of the Philistines in revenge. During his absence his father-in-law gave his wife to another man in marriage and Samson, in return, gathered three hundred foxes and tying them two and two together placed a fire brand between their tails and sent them into the cornfields of the Philistines, by which means their entire crops were destroyed. In revenge the Philistines burned up his father-in-law and his wife as the indirect causes of their misfortunes, whereupon Samson fell upon them and "smote them hip and thigh," creating a terrible slaughter. After this he took refuge on the top of the rock at Etam. The Philistines collected an

army and marched against the people of Judah, in whose country he was, and they made peace by delivering up Samson. He agreed to surrender provided they would not harm him. Bound with new ropes he was brought into camp amid the triumphant shouts of the enemy, but the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him and he broke the cords asunder, and gathering the jaw-bone of an ass he slew a thousand of the Philistines.

Some time after this, while visiting Gaza, the gates of the city were closed against him, his murder being intended in the morning, but at midnight he went and tore away the gates, posts, bars, and all, and carried them on his shoulders to the top of a hill before Hebron.

His triumph over the thousand Philistines caused his elevation to the fourteenth judgeship of Israel, and it was from this high elevation, this pinnacle of glory for those times that he was destined to a most disgraceful fall. Few men can bear great elevation. Their heads become dizzy and down they go. Saul was glorious till he began to reign, and then became a monster of iniquity. Elisha wept when he beheld the excellent Hazael, and on being asked why, said that he who was now so splendid a character would become a cruel man of blood. "What, is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" replied Hazael. Elisha simply said, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." Nero was a paragon of good behavior till made emperor, and then committed such crimes as have blackened the catalogue of human guilt. Samson kept his vow till made judge of Israel

and then relinquished it. Having been a widower for some time he became infatuated with another Philistine woman and this time it was the fair and false Delilah. The Philistines detecting his love for their fair countrywoman, and having tried in vain to conquer the great Samson by force, resorted to treachery. With eleven hundred pieces of silver, they bribed Delilah to find out from Samson the secret of his great strength. She consented and with honeyed words and smiles so won upon him that she not only married him but caused him to spend most of his time at her house. When in his most tender moods she would ask him for the secret of his strength, and he, conscious of his ability to extricate himself from any difficulty, toyed with what he supposed to be her womanly fancies. He told her several untruths. He said if he were bound with seven green withes he would not be able to break them. The Philistines were summoned, and Samson bound. She then cried out, "The Philistines are coming to take thee, Samson." He broke them as easily as if they had been threads. She said, "Oh, Samson, you mock me, tell me I pray thee, what is the secret of thy strength in truth." He said if he were bound with two new ropes that had never been used he could not break them. He was thus bound, and then she cried, "The Philistines are coming, Samson," but he broke the ropes as if they had been burnt strings. "Ah, Samson," she said, "you don't love me; tell thy loving wife what it is that makes thee so strong; a man should keep nothing from his wife." Samson then said if she would weave or plait his

long hair in a certain way his strength would go from him, and he would be as weak as other men. Ah, now he begins to approach the reason; God forgotten and dishonored, he is nearing his doom. Then she plaited his hair, or wove it over a beam, and cried out: "The Philistines are coming, Samson," when he arose and went away carrying the beam with him. "Ah, Samson, you don't love me; you don't love me at all," she cried. "How canst thou say I love thee, when thou hast mocked me these three times?" She still gave him no rest, but begged that he would tell her the truth, until at last he yielded. He said that he had been a Nazarite ever since he was born, that his hair, the badge of his vow, had never been cut, and that if it were shaven off from his head he would be strong no longer, but weak like other men. The artful woman saw that he was in earnest now, and sent for the Philistines to come. They came and brought the money they had promised. Then while Samson was asleep in her lap she called a man to cut off his hair. It was done, and she cried out: "Samson, the Philistines are coming to take you." He awoke, rose and shook himself as usual, but was powerless to do anything against his enemies. His vow was broken, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and he, a victim in the hands of his enemies, betrayed by the wife of his bosom!

The Philistines now put out his eyes, bound him in brass fetters, led him down to Gaza and made him grind corn in the prison. The grinding of corn by convicts was the meanest work known among the

Philistines and usually assigned to women, and now that the spiritual Hercules should be reduced to what was the very depth of degradation. Poor Samson! we pity him in his lonely estate. But how many men are now grinding corn in our prisons or picking coal in the mines who were once opulent, elevated and respected? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Deserted by every other friend there was one, however, who did not forsake him. It was God. It was just that Samson should remain in prison, but there was one thing unobserved by the Philistines, and that was his hair was growing all the while.

What happened between Delilah and Samson while he was in prison we do not know. Milton, who comes nearest to the inspired writers, represents Delilah, in his drama of "Samson Agonistes," as deeply repentant for her crime against her husband, and as visiting him in person to implore his forgiveness, whereupon he exclaims:

"Out! out! hyena, these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee;
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray.
Then as repentant, to submit, beseech
And reconcilement move with feigned remorse."

She then urges her weakness, and the weakness of her sex, saying of his secret, "nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's frailty." He exclaims:

"How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions to upbraid me mine.
* * * * * Weakness is thy excuse;
And I believe it; weakness to resist Philista's gold."

Delilah then says if he will forgive she will implore her countrymen in his behalf. He replies:

“No, no, of my condition take no care.
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain,
Nor think me so unwary or accurst,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost; thy gins and toils,
Thy fair enchanting cup and warbling charms
No more on me have power.”

Repulsed at every turn she throws herself upon her reserved resource and pleads her love of country and the grateful esteem in which she will be held by her posterity. She says, bidding him adieu:—

“ My name perhaps among the circumcised
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes
To all posterity may stand defamed,
With malediction mentioned, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced;
But in my country where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be named among the famousest
Of women—sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock bands; my tomb
With odors visited and annual flowers;
Not less renowned than in Mt. Ephraim
Jael, who inhospitable quite,
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nailed.”

That was all very pretty talk if it had not been that she was bribed. Jael never betrayed her husband, and she never betrayed her country's enemy for money.

Bribery has been the curse of the ages. Not alone in Philistia, but in the most modern and civilized countries on earth, the public records are blackened by bribery and corruption. Men are bribed in this republican country and vote for certain men, and these men are bribed when they reach the halls of legislation to betray their country's best interests. The Credit Mobilier stands prominent among the black jobs of Washington City, and other great public works have beneath them the skulking form of the traitor. But there is not a walk or occupation in life that has not felt the polluting touch of bribery. Alas ! alas ! what have not men, what have not women, done for money.

“O, black, insatiate avarice ! Child of the lowest hell,
Who can thy nature fathom, who can thy horrors tell ?
Oft hast thou stripped the orphan ; oft broke the widow's heart ;
Oft pierced the best and noblest with thy relentless dart.
Oft driven men to madness ; fair women driven to shame ;
Oft filled the field with slaughter, and cities wrapt in flame ;
Oft stained the robe of justice, and human rights denied,
And round religious altars thy baleful traffic plied.
But oh, the blackest picture in all the book of time
Thy price the bits of silver—a soul betrayed thy crime.

And chief of all the representatives of bribery may be placed Delilah among women, and Judas Iscariot among men, the one for eleven hundred pieces of silver betrayed her husband, the other for thirty pieces of silver betrayed the Saviour of the world. Judas in remorse went and hanged himself, and Delilah likewise met an awful doom.

The scene now changes from the prison to more than a palace. The Philistines concluded to celebrate their victory over the great Israelite by a feast in honor of their god Dagon who delivered him, as they thought, into their hands. The great temple of Dagon is thrown open. A thousand lights blaze from a thousand gilded altars. Three thousand Philistines gather in the spacious halls. The wildest music lends its inspiring strains, while the wine cup is quaffed in honor of the heathen god. When the hearts of all "beat high and warm, with banquet song and dance and wine," a cry is made that Samson be brought in to be the butt of their jests and ridicule. A committee is dispatched who speedily return with the downcast giant of Israel. He stalks along led by a lad amid the jibes and taunts of the multitude, and is placed between the pillars of the temple where all eyes could behold him. Then begins their mockery. "Samson give us another riddle," shouts a chorus of voices. He did not give a riddle but he was about to act one. He told the boy guide to take him to a position where he could feel the pillars and lean against them, which was done. Then deeply penitent for all his sins, he prayed saying, "O Lord remember me and give me strength only this once," and shaking himself as of yore, and throwing his arms around the pillars, with one tremendous effort those pillars came together like the interlocking masts of a great ship, the roof moved up and down as if shaken by an earthquake, and the walls tottered, till with a mighty crush down came the temple, and three thousand Philistines, together with

Samson and the treacherous Delilah, were buried beneath the frightful ruins. A sound as of a mighty thunder rent the air, a great cloud of dust and ashes ascended to the sky, and the spirit of death reigned o'er the scene. "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." It was meet that he who had been such a sinner should perish, but not until his enemies were destroyed, his mission performed and his country free. But what shall we say of his traitor wife? When the awful panic came, when the walls were crumbling, she was doubtless the first to shriek in terror, as the most guilty of all, and the curses of her expiring countrymen were directed against her as the indirect cause of their fearful overthrow.

From this history there are a few lessons that should be engraven as with a pen of steel upon every heart. Beware of the wiles of a wicked woman. I have said much of good women in this course of these lectures. For the first time you behold a bad one. "The women of Bible fame pass before the imagination in the vision of antiquity, like pure and radiant stars, their frailties scarcely more than the wing of a transparent cloud upon these beautiful spheres. Delilah rises suddenly from darkness, as a glorious meteor, describes an arc of romantic and fatal light, and goes down in a horizon of awful gloom."

Women when they are good may be called "earth's angels," but beware of them when they are bad, for they are capable of a refinement in wickedness to which men can never attain. All along the track of

the world's history lie the wrecks of great men, ruined by the fatal power of wicked women. Behold the gray hairs of Solomon brought down in sorrow to the grave as he exclaims: "I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets and her hands are bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her." Behold Cæsar, "the foremost man of all this world, entrapped by Cleopatra, and Mark Anthony that he might gain her favor relinquishing the mastery of earth. Hear him as he piteously appeals to the enchantress saying:

"Let not Cæsar's servile minions
Mock the lion thus laid low,
'Twas no foeman's hand that slew him,
'Twas his own that struck the blow;
Hear then, pillow'd on thy bosom
Ere his star fades quite away,
Him who drunk with thy caresses
Madly flung a world away."

"Favor is deceitful and beauty vain," says the eternal word, "but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised."

Secondly, behold here the unwisdom of marrying outside of your own country people and religion. Had Samson married an Israelitish maiden he would never have come to such an end; but to become enamored of any enemy to his country, who was a devotee at the shrine of a heathen god, was shocking to any one, particularly a Judge of Israel. Yet how many at this day and time treat this subject with the

utmost indifference. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath light with darkness or Christ with Belial."

Thirdly. Be sure your sin will find you out. If a man is cherishing a secret sin let him not think that he can indulge it for a long time unperceived and then abandon it; as well think of damming up the Mississippi with reeds or of extinguishing the fires of Vesuvius with a rain storm. When at its full power the current of sin will rush over all obstacles and bear you along to your destruction. Little did Samson think when he began his visits to the fair Delilah that they would end in his ruin, but "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Lastly, let us admire the goodness of God who would not permit even the wily Delilah to defeat the purpose for which Samson was given, or to triumph over the spiritual interests of the great man. God maketh the wrath of woman as well as of man to praise him, while the remainder of wrath he restrains. It was necessary that Samson should die, as he did, to atone for his follies, but his deceptive wife and his country's enemies perished with him, and from that awful tomb, that pile dedicated to a heathen god, he was taken to the temple above, not to be the prey of a wicked woman and the jest and reproach of a vulgar crowd, but the crowned hero of Israel, honored by saints and angels; while Delilah, the traitor wife, who sold her husband for paltry gold, must be forever classed with those wretches of society who

“Concentered all in self
Living must forfeit fair renown,
And doubly dying must go down
To the vile dust from whence they sprung
Unwept, unhonored and unsung.”



THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

LECTURE X.

THE WITCH OF ENDOR, THE ENCHANTRESS OF THE GHOST OF SAMUEL.

THE subject of witchcraft has claimed the attention of men in all ages, and in all countries of the world. Traces of it may be found in the most ancient literature of earth. It has been deciphered from Egyptian hieroglyphics. It has occupied a prominent place in the Greek and Latin classics. A full account is given of witches by Lucan and Tibullus, by Virgil and other Latin writers. In Germany there is a festival called the "walpurgis" which has come down from ancient times, and takes place on the first of May, when the peasantry stay out all night in the fields with whips in their hands driving away the witches, and on which depends the success of their enterprises. In England and Scotland the belief in witches overspread the whole land about two hundred years ago. Shakespeare's greatest plays would lose half their interest if the ghosts and witch scenes were taken away. In the early settlement of this country the belief in witchcraft prevailed to an alarming extent, and many persons suffered on account of it. In one year twenty were executed, among them a clergyman, and several of the most reputable citizens of Massachusetts; eight

more were condemned, one hundred and fifty were imprisoned, and two hundred more accused. Such great and good men as Cotton Mather, Judge Stoughton, the Rev. Mr. Noyes, of Salem, and Increase Mather, the president of Harvard College, encouraged arrests, and proclaimed that this was an effort of the devil to gain the victory over the saints.

But what is of more importance still, we read of witchcraft in all its forms in the Bible; we find here accounts of the "users of divination," "the observers of times," "the enchanter," "the charmers," "the ventriloquists," "the astrologers," and consulters of "familiar spirits," &c. The prevalent idea in regard to these witches (generally females) was that they entered into a compact with the devil, written in their own blood, by which they resigned themselves to him forever, in return for which he gave them gnomes or familiar spirits to attend them; and who received the advantage of transforming themselves into any shape they pleased, which was generally that of a hare or cat, transporting themselves through the air on broom sticks; "sailing on the sea in a sieve," gliding through key holes, inflicting diseases upon cattle and calling spirits from the vasty deep. But chief of all the witches that ever lived was "the witch of Endor." One of the first conundrums ever propounded to me as a boy was "Where did the witch of Endor live!" and I replied that I did not know, neither do I know now. Commentators tell us that she did not live at Endor (a city of Palestine), but in a lonely valley of Mount Gilboa. The name Endor which she bore was

that of the idol god she served. En Ador meant fountain of light, and by eliding the “a” we have Endor, the name by which she will be forever known. She was doubtless a typical witch, and if so, she was an old hag, far advanced in life, with shrivelled form, high cheek bones, and sunken, snaky eyes, but with great intelligence, and possessing an intimate knowledge of human nature. She, like other witches, was doubtless accustomed to administer poisonous drugs and medicines, and broths prepared from most disgusting ingredients. How they did this and what they employed we may learn from the witch scene in Macbeth. Before they were prepared to tell the destiny of the ambitious general they brought forth the cauldron, in which they placed the most disgusting and shocking ingredients —poisoned entrails, toads, sweltered venom, fillet of fennysnake,

“Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder’s fork and blind worm’s sting,
Lizard’s leg and owlet’s wing,”

and so on with an almost infinite variety. Around the cauldron they all go shouting:

“Double double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

This horrid work over, they call for the spirits. The first apparition was an arm and head; the second a bloody child; the third a child crowned with a tree in its hand, all of which possessed great significance for the future throne of Cawdor and king of Scotland.

You have, therefore, in one of these old hags described as cooking "hell broth" on the "blasted heath" my ideal of the witch of Endor, living in some desolate, storm-washed, thunder-stricken ravine, of a weird mountain, forsaken of God, abandoned of men, dreaded by women and children, and tormented by the devil. And yet from that forbidden retreat there came forth a story unequalled in startling details by the wildest creations of the great masters of fiction. Lord Byron, certainly no mean critic, said: "I have always thought this the finest and most finished witch scene that ever was written or conceived, and you will be of my opinion if you consider all the circumstances of the actors of the case, together with the gravity, simplicity, and density of the language. It beats all the ghost scenes I ever read." That which makes the "case" so interesting is the statement that the witch had a King of Israel for a consulter, and a prophet of God for an apparition. The "circumstances" are as follows: Saul, the son of Kish, had been in his youth the "glory of Israel," standing morally as well as physically head and shoulders above his fellows, and had been anointed by the venerable Samuel as the first King of Israel. This Saul, corrupted by power, had fallen first into one sin and then another until he became a physical and spiritual wreck; with the murder of eighty-five priests of the Lord staining his soul; with his hated rival David, whom he sought to kill, fast rising into power, and with the hosts of the Philistines, the ancient foes of Israel, drawn up in battle array against him, God's anger had been specially kindled

against him because he had spared Amalek, against whom he had demanded that eternal warfare should be waged. Saul felt that his hour of retribution had come, and that unless he received help from on high he must perish forever. Having gone to God in vain (for he would not answer him “by Urim, by prophets, or by dreams”), he concluded to consult the ghost of Samuel, who was long since dead and in Heaven, if he could find it. Samuel had by his wisdom, prudence, and piety, long prevented during Saul’s reign the ruin of Israel; and though the wicked king had turned his back upon the illustrious prophet in the days of his prosperity, now that he was in despair he wanted to gaze upon nothing so much as the silver locks and flowing robes of the great judge and prophet, even though it should be through the questionable intervention of “familiar spirits.” But how could he go to them? He had issued orders that resulted in the destruction of all that could be found, but still there were some, like the “Moonshiners” of to-day, that hid in the mountain defiles, and dark caverns who had escaped apprehension and arrest. A drowning man will catch at a straw. “Then said Saul unto his servants, seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor, the shrine of the idol god.” Then, at the dead of night, while the two armies, that of Philistia at Shunem, and that of Israel on Mount Gilboa, are opposing each other like crouching lions ready to spring with the opening dawn; at such an

hour "Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment," and with the two servants proceeded to the sacrilegious and hated oracle. We can see him as he wends his melancholy way along devious bypaths to the home of familiar spirits, which he too justly fears may be but the ante-chamber through which he will pass to the abode of spirits forever lost. Stealthily the rejected and doomed man moves along, while the very sticks and stones seem to prate of his whereabouts, and he fears in each bush a Philistine, or messenger of God bent on his destruction. Down the mountain side he goes, the night dews wetting his hoary locks, till descending into a narrow defile, the three stand before the wretched hovel where the "brindle cat" hath so often mewed, and the mystic "hedge pig" hath so often whined. No time is to be lost, so they knocked at the door. "Who's there?" says a shrieking voice within. "Friends;" was the reply. The door is cautiously opened and the snakey eyes of the witch rest upon the despairing king. He said, "Bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee." She replied, "Thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off all those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land, wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life to cause me to die?" Saul then swore he would not betray her—"As the Lord liveth there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing." She then invited him in and began her horrid incantations, similar, it may be, to those on the "blasted heath"—

“ Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble,
Cool it with a baboon’s blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.”

When everything was completed, the room filled with sickening odors and noxious gases, she asks, “ Whom shall I bring up unto thee ? ” He said, “ Bring me up Samuel.” “ He is here ! ” she cried, and then with a loud shriek, as if frightened nearly to death, she exclaimed, “ Why hath thou deceived me ? for thou art Saul ! ” Overwhelmed by the supposed presence of the apparition, he assured her that she should not be hurt, and, trembling, asked, “ What sawest thou ? ” She replied, “ I saw God ascending out of the earth.” And then he asks, “ What form is he of ? ” She said, “ An old man cometh up ; and he is covered with a mantle.” Saul, recognizing in her description the prophet Samuel, “ stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.” Then follows a colloquy between the ghost of Samuel and Saul.

Ghost.—“ Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up ? ”

Saul.—“ I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more neither by prophets, nor by dreams ; therefore, I have called thee, that thou mayst make known unto me what I shall do.”

Ghost.—“ Wherefore then doest thou ask of me seeing the Lord has departed from thee, and is become thine enemy, for the Lord hath sent the kingdom out of thine hand and given it to thy neighbor, even to

David, because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executest his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing to thee this day. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

At the close of this awful communication the ghost vanishes, and Saul falls prostrate straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel. After partaking of a repast of calf's flesh, which was forced upon him, he and his two men rose up and went away that night. The next day Israel was defeated by the Philistines, and Saul, the son of Kish, was slain by falling with suicidal intent upon his own sword, while the old witch was left to ply her mysterious calling in the dark woods of Gilboa.

There are three questions that have presented themselves to your minds that it is now my duty to attempt to answer. The first is, Do you believe in the doctrine of spirits? Secondly. How are we to account for the séance here described? Thirdly. What is the Bible view of witchcraft?

To the first question I respond yes and no. There is a sense in which I believe in spirits. I believe that there is a spiritual world, and it may be just at hand. Milton says, "Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth both when we wake and when we sleep." Some are good, and some are bad. The good are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to all them that shall be heirs of salvation." The bad are demons going up and down the earth, seeking whom they may devour.

I believe that man has within him a spirit or soul which ascends to God, when the body returns to dust, to have a conscious existence after its destiny has been assigned either in heaven or hell. I believe that the spirits which belong to a higher order of creation than man, and also the spirits of dead men, have sometimes made themselves visible to mortal eyes. Angels appeared to Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Elijah, and others. The devil appeared to Eve, to Job, and to the Son of God. People were possessed with evil spirits; out of Mary Magdalene were cast seven devils; and the devils left the demoniac of Gadara, and entering a herd of swine caused them to rush headlong into the sea; Moses and Elias appeared on Mount Tabor in the transfiguration scene. Men have also received communications from the other world in visions, trances, and dreams. While all this is true, I am not a believer in familiar spirits, users of divination, necromancers, witchcraft or spiritualism, and I doubt not but the witch of Endor was a stupendous fraud, and the tens of thousands like her who have startled the world with their mysterious necromancy, and equally destitute of the slightest claim to credibility.

The question then arises, How are we to account for the case before us? I am willing to admit that it has been the subject of much controversy. Spiritualists rely upon it as their great stronghold. That hovel in the lonely mountain valley has been the fortress in which they have intrenched themselves for ages. In a book in my library called "Clear Light from the Spirit World," the author, after narrating the incident,

says: "I was deeply affected by this account; if the record was worthy of its place in the sacred Scriptures, it was worthy of belief," and the facts appeared to be clearly stated. To which I reply that it was the duty of the sacred historian simply to record what happened, and he must not be understood as sanctioning the things recorded. Saul certainly visited the witch, and was fatally affected by the impression she made on his mind, but that does not argue that what she pretended to do was a reality. Had Albert Sidney Johnson consulted a fortune teller the day before he was slain, and as he went down in the tide of war had exclaimed, "Just what she told me," that fact should have been recorded by the historian, but it would not have proven that the fortune teller was a true prophetess, except in that instance, which would be a mere guess. That the witch of Endor was not recognized by God, we know from the fact that one of the reasons assigned for Saul's death was that, in disobedience to the laws of God, he consulted this "familiar spirit." The author of "Clear Light" goes on to say, "At the call of this woman, who had a familiar spirit, Samuel appeared in his own proper person; for Saul knew him, and recognized him, and they held a conversation together, and it was of vital consequence to Saul." To this I reply that it is nowhere stated that Saul saw Samuel. The witch said, "I see Samuel," but she doubtless saw him as Hamlet saw the ghost of Yorick, in her "mind's eye, Horatio." She was doubtless familiar with the appearance of the venerable Samuel as "an old man with a mantle," and she knew

Saul wanted to see him, and it was easy enough after her incantations to say to the bewildered monarch, "I see Samuel." Neither did Saul talk with Samuel save through the medium—the witch, who was a ventriloquist and could thus deceive him. The author of "Clear Light," continues, "Could Samuel have appeared in his mortal body, which had gone to dust, or did he not come in his glorious incorruptible spirit body?" This gives up the whole question. He could not come in his mortal body, which had gone to dust, and the Bible says plainly that the spirit body will not be given till the general resurrection of the dead at the last day, so that Samuel did not appear at all, except possibly to the excited imagination of the old witch. Some commentators think that God wrought a miracle in bringing up Samuel's form (though utterly condemning witchcraft) on the principle that "they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Saul would impiously consult a witch though God had forbidden it; and they think that God simply performed this miracle that he might consult the witch to his sorrow. But we cannot suppose that God would thus trifle with his deceased servant, who for good reasons had stopped communicating with Saul while living, and now certainly could not be supposed to do so that he was dead. If God refused to answer the wicked king "by Urim, by prophets, and by dreams," we may rest assured he would not do so by ghosts. Besides all this, the ghost is represented as saying to Saul, "to-morrow, thou and thy sons shall be with me." If any man ever went to heaven, it was Samuel,

and yet the wicked king and his wicked sons, as a punishment for their great sins were, according to the Witch of Endor, to be taken right up into heaven with the good Samuel.

Dr. George C. Baldwin, of New York, accounts for this case on the principle of "mind reading," which is far more plausible than the theory just mentioned. He says, "This power, possessed by persons of a certain nervous temperament, can be traced through all the records of the past. We call it animal magnetism, clairvoyance, the nervous principle, or psychology. It is demonstrated now beyond a doubt that by mysterious but purely natural influences, a person of a certain nervous organization can be placed, at will, in such connection with another similarly organized that the mind of the latter will be open to that of the former; the former will feel, see, and know just what the latter feels, sees and knows." He then gives some interesting facts. Eliot Warburton, one of the finest scholars of the age, states that at Cairo he engaged a magician to visit him, who performed the following: A boy was called in, and after some ado, was made to look intently into his own hands. The charm being completed, he told Warburton to ask for any one he pleased, and he would appear. He asked for Sir Henry Hardinge. The boy said, "He is here;" and described him exactly, as a little man, in a black dress, white cravat, grey hair, and having but one leg, all of which was true to the life. He affirms that this was exactly what the Witch of Endor achieved in connection with the ghost of Samuel. The boy only told him

what was in his own mind, and the Witch of Endor only told what was on Saul's mind. No medium has ever been able to do more than this. "What the questioner knows," says the great and metaphysical Dr. Bell, the so-called spirits know, and what the questioner does not know the so-called spirits are entirely ignorant of. I am a believer in mind reading; I have seen people mesmerized who knew and spoke just as the operator thought. Mind reading is just the opposite, when the operator knows and sees just what the subject or consulter knows and sees. I once formed a unit of a very large audience when a mind reader gave her performance. She told any one in that vast audience to write down any question they chose and she would tell what it was. In different portions of the hall this was done while she remained blindfolded, and yet she repeated one after another the questions asked. There were about two dozen persons present *en rapport* with her, and I was one of them. And here let me say, that all the wonderful performances of so-called spiritualists, that cannot be accounted for on the principle of sleight of hand, may be explained in the way mentioned. Foster of New York, and others like him, could easily accomplish by mind reading what they might fail to do by legerdemain. The Witch of Endor might have been a mind reader, and that solves the whole mystery, without the puerile conclusion that she actually brought up the ghost of the venerable and godly Samuel.

I incline, however, to the opinion that the séance of the Witch of Endor was the result of imposture and

collusion. Saul conversed with the witch alone; may not his servants, therefore, for a bribe, have been personating Samuel in another room? I repeat, Saul did not see Samuel, and the woman could make her sepulchral voice appear to come from whatever direction she wished. There is no denying the fact that nine-tenths of the so-called spiritualistic manifestations may be explained as mere impositions. I once witnessed an exposition of spiritualism, and each trick was one that had been heralded abroad as "confirmation strong as proofs from Holy Writ;" and yet it was exposed to the satisfaction of all present. The tricks were wonderful, but not more so than those of the magicians who travel over the land, one of whom was in Montgomery the past week. Time would fail me to tell you of a hundredth part of the ghost stories that have wrought multitudes to frenzy, and were afterwards exploded, but I will give one or two that have been most celebrated. The first is the apparition of Mrs. Veal, in all the later editions of Drelincourt on Death, in other respects a very good book. The story is this: "Mrs. Veal and Mrs. Bargrave had long been friends, but being separated at a distance from each other, they had not met for several years. One day about noon Mrs. Bargrave heard a knocking at her door, and on opening it who should be there but Mrs. Veal. She came in, sat down, and talked with her friend upon various subjects, among the rest of Mr. Drelincourt's book on Death, which she highly praised. At length she went to call on another friend; soon after which Mrs. Bargrave learned to her utter aston-

ishment that Mrs. Veal had died the previous day." The story was told, thousands believed it, and it was printed in all subsequent editions of Drelincourt on Death, which work the ghost praised. And yet it was afterwards confessed that a bookseller who had Drelincourt on Death on his shelves, and could not sell the books, went to Daniel Defoe, the author of Robinson Crusoe, for advice, and the wily Defoe wrote this ghost story, which caused the book to pass through twenty editions. Another case is that of the celebrated Stockwell ghost, that caused thousands of people to go almost if not entirely crazy. A Mrs. Golding, of Stockwell, England, had a servant who was a medium. Spirits continually infested the house, chairs would be thrown over; plates, dishes, china, glassware, and small movables seemed to be animated, changed their places, flew about the room, and were broken to pieces. Mrs. Golding went to live with a neighbor and the same thing happened there. She concluded to dismiss her servant girl, and the spirits at once left and no more plates and dishes were broken, and the girl confessed that she did it by fixing long horsehairs to some articles of crockery, wires to other articles, and doing the balance by sleight of hand. I have known some servant girls who could heap up china, glassware, and upturn things generally without the aid of horsehairs, wires, or sleight of hand. I believe that the old hag of Gilboa took advantage of Saul's wrecked and nervous condition to impose on him.

Upon principles equally satisfactory we may account for all the so-called manifestations of spiritual-

ism. Owing to the length of this discourse, I can only hint at them.

Many are the results of natural causes, unnoticed. The celebrated ghost of the Brocken is in point here, which terrified multitudes. The Brocken is the name of one of the highest peaks of the Hartz mountains in Germany. The spectre was witnessed by thousands, who said they plainly saw it, and that it was very large, a very Titan or Jupiter. A Mr. Hane visited it early one morning in 1797. The air was surcharged with vapor, though not sufficiently dense to obscure the rays of the sun. Looking up towards the south-east he saw in the air a human figure facing him, of monstrous size. The outline was distinct and the spectacle appalling. At this instant, nearly frightened to death, the wind blowing a gale which threatened to sweep away his hat, he raised his hand to his head, when lo, the spectre did the same thing. He then threw up both arms, the spectre did the same. He kicked with his feet, the spectre did the same; whatever he did the monster was sure to imitate. So he came to the perfectly natural and correct conclusion that the sky for the time was a "molten looking glass" reflecting his own image. Owing to the same cause vessels at sea are frequently painted on the sky long before the ship comes in sight. On the same ground a young girl was nearly frightened to death by seeing a ghostly woman pictured on the window of a chapel near her house, which turned out to be the figure of an old woman who went out at that hour every night, lantern in hand, to gather her cabbages, and thus had herself pictured on the window.

The ancient black art of raising devils was of this class. The magician would build a fire, burning such things as would get the atmosphere in a certain state above the flame, and then by means of concave mirrors produce the fantastic figures that the observers thought were real devils from the abyss of hell.

Many so-called apparitions are caused by disease. A man with *delirium tremens* sees monkeys, and dogs, and serpents, as really to his own view as if they actually existed. The nervous system can be gotten into this state without the aid of drink, and generally then the apparitions take the form of human beings. These appearances can also be produced by powerful narcotics, and other medicines. Read DeQuincy's Opium Eater if you would know what horrid spectacles appear under the influence of this terrible drug. The famous witch potion of old belongs to this class of instruments employed for the deception of mankind.

Abnormal conditions of the organs of sight sometimes cause these apparitions to appear. The Bible tells of a man who saw men as trees walking, which arose from the fact that he had not entirely recovered his sight. The eyes sometimes act without the objects in view, as if they were present. Dr. Abercrombie tells of a friend of his who was thus troubled with ghostly visitants. "They, in general, present," he says, "human countenances; the head and upper parts of the body are distinctly defined, while the lower parts are lost in a cloud." You have heard of many a man who could "see stars in the daytime." Distress of conscience, owing to the committing of a great

crime, causes some men to see ghosts. "How long," says a fine writer, "have murderers and seducers been haunted by the ghosts of their victims, till they could no longer endure life, and have put an end to their own existence?"

I once knew a man who said he was shadowed by a woman for twenty years. Wherever he went she was at his back; he went to Mexico, she followed him there; he went to Europe, she followed him there; at last he had her arrested and tried, and she was acquitted. The mystery has never been solved. Was it not the ghost of this woman, not really present, but conjured up by his excited and guilty imagination?

The captain of a ship took a dislike to one of his men, whose name was Bill Jones, and shot him down in cold blood; and as though this was not enough, cut him up and boiled him in a large kettle. But his conscience, seared as it was, was not easy after this. He was distressed, pined away, and fancied that the ghost of Bill Jones was ever after him. At length when the ship was under full sail he jumped overboard. Every effort was made to save him, but in vain; when he rose for the last time, he threw himself back out of the water, lifted up his hands and cried with a horrid oath, "Bill Jones is with me here." He then went down forever. These and many other incidents are given by Dr. Pond in his admirable treatise, but I must hasten to close with the remark that the Bible is eternally opposed to witchcraft in all its forms. The existence of witches was expressly forbidden. In Leviticus xx. 6 we read: "The soul that turneth after such as

have familiar spirits, and after wizards, I will ever set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people." Again, 27th verse: "The man or woman that hath a familiar spirit shall surely be put to death." Even King Saul in his better days, when God answered him, carried out this law and caused all witches to be destroyed, thus disproving utterly that the scene at Endo was a true case; God also ordained that those who consulted witches should be punished, as we know from the passage already quoted, and from the additional fact, fatal to the theory that the old hag was a real witch, that Saul was slain because he consulted her. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus declares against familiar spirits. "If they have not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

Then, another reason why you should not tamper with so-called spirits: such a course dishonors God, discredits the Bible, imitates the heathen, favors superstition, and often results in disappointment, misery, insanity, and death. After all there is one spirit that we may consult, nay, that we must consult if we would be saved; one spirit that we must receive, not only into our homes but into our hearts; one whose prerogative is to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come; and to teach all things, and bring all things to our remembrance;

“even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not,” the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father sends in the name of Jesus Christ. This Spirit has often visited you, and continues to visit you, and if you continue to reject him you will be lost forever !

“Say, sinner, hath a voice within,
Oft whispered to thy secret soul,
Urged thee to leave the ways of sin,
And yield thy heart to God’s control?
Sinner, it was a heavenly voice,
It was the Spirit’s gracious call,
It bade thee make the better choice,
And haste to seek in Christ thine all.
God’s Spirit will not always strive,
With hardened, self-destroying man;
Ye who persist his love to grieve,
May never hear his voice again.”

HANNAH.

LECTURE XI.

HANNAH, THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

IN a lonely mountain valley in the central range of Palestine, known as Mt. Ephraim, there lived about the time the rule of the judges was going to decay, a man whose name was Elkanah. To his eternal shame be it spoken, he had two wives. God ordained that man should have but one wife. Monogamy was instituted in paradise, and God said "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." And yet bigamy and polygamy have ever and anon disgraced every age and every country of the world. From the king on his throne to the humblest peasant that endures the bitter gripes of smarting poverty have been found those who have insulted their Maker by the gross violation of his laws. And perhaps it is not saying too much to affirm that no country on the face of the earth has been so afflicted by it as our own christian America. The worst feature connected with it here is that it is practiced in the holy name of religion. Just before Madame Roland expired on the scaffold in Paris she saw a statue of liberty in the distance, and exclaimed, "O Liberty, Liberty, what crimes have not been committed in thy name;" and as the

painted harlot of Mormonism rises before my imagination I can but exclaim, "O Religion, Religion, what crimes have not been committed in thy name!" If a man is found with two or more wives in the States of this Union he is arrested and brought to punishment, but thousands under cover of a so-called religious denomination have been permitted to practice the abomination in one of the most productive and promising territories of the west; and further than this, they have been permitted to send forth their proselyting emissaries to work social ruin in the best-ordered communities of the land. "A party of Mormons passed through the city a few nights ago bound for Arizona, where they go to establish a new Mormon colony," says a Montgomery paper. No wonder that the incensed people have in some instances taken the law into their own hands and furnished these prowlers with coats of tar and feathers, or dyed the earth with their blood. Were they altogether wrong?

"The traitor to humanity is the traitor most accursed,
Man is more than constitutions; better rot beneath the sod
Than be true to church and state, while we are doubly false to
God."

The ægis of religious liberty is very broad, but not broad enough to cover crime. Suppose a sect should be started whose cardinal principle were robbery, or murder, or arson, should it be tolerated? If so, all that is necessary to insure success to the anarchists is for them to call themselves a church. If so, the doctrine of religious freedom is a delusion and a snare.

The time has come when the true churches of Jesus Christ should speak out on this subject, and demand of our legislators at Washington the suppression of this infamy.

Elkanah had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, and he received the punishment due to this violation of divine and human law in the ruin of the peace of his household. Jealousy, "the green-eyed monster that mocks the meat it feeds on," took possession of the heart of Peninnah and she taunted her rival, the gentle and patient Hannah, with being childless—the great opprobrium of Hebrew women. She fancied, too, that Elkanah loved her best, and the life of Hannah was rendered miserable.

It was the custom of Elkanah to go with his family yearly to Shiloh, where the tabernacle was then located, to make offerings to the Lord. He is not the only man, living in the commission of a heinous sin, who would yet make offerings to God, as if he could compound his guilt with the Almighty! How often have we seen a man cheating and defrauding his neighbors during the week, using false balances, or palming off worthless merchandise at a large price; and yet, with his hymn book or Bible under his arm, going to church on Sunday, taking a front pew, and rolling his hypocritical eyes to heaven, as if he could peer into the very "Holy of Holies."

Elkanah, with his long face and pious expression of countenance, went on the occasion now referred to, to offer gifts. He was a shepherd, and could easily secure the lambs necessary. Peninnah with her children

walked by his side, while poor Hannah followed, reproached by an occasional contemptuous look from her tormentor. The tabernacle reached, Elkanah and Peninnah approached the altar, while Hannah stopped at the door. She has made up her mind that she will get rid of her trouble by going to the Lord in prayer. It was the crisis of her existence. In bitterness of soul and weeping sorely, "she vowed a vow, and said, O, Lord of Hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." The priest at that time was Eli, that distinguished servant of God, who as judge and priest ruled over Israel for forty years. When Eli saw her attitude and motions and heard no words, he thought she was drunk and said, "How long wilt thou be drunken, put away thy wine from thee." This was a very rash and uncalled-for rebuke, but it shows one thing, and that is—Eli abhorred drunkenness. In the prohibition contests that have been going on over the country some anti-prohibitionists have been wicked enough to assert that the Bible was on their side, but they may be safely challenged to find a single place where the Word of God tolerates intemperance. A few good men may be found who drank wine immoderately, but they were always condemned for it. For the sin of drunkenness some of God's fiercest judgments were visited on the people. The prevailing language of the Scripture is "look not upon the wine

when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, for at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder," and it is expressly stated that "no drunkard shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Hannah was not long in convincing Eli that she was not drunk. She said, "No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord: count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial; for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." The venerable servant of God then replied, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." A smile then lit up the face of the long-afflicted woman like a ray of sunlight upon a marble statue, for having long fasted it is said "she went her way, and did eat and her countenance was no more sad." In the morning as the rays of heaven gilded the gorgeous tabernacle, she knelt again at its shrine, and leaving there her simple offering, the incense of an uncorrupted spirit, she arose and turned her happy feet towards her lonely mountain home. After awhile a son was born to her, and she cried out while her heart was overflowing with joy, "Call his name Samuel, because I have asked him of the Lord." Who can tell the delight with which she gazed on that cherub form? Tupper says, "A babe is a well spring of pleasure in every household." But think ye not that a cloud came over the brow of this holy mother, as she thought that in a little while he must be torn from her embrace, and be separated from her forever.

She remembered her vow, and told her husband that she would not accompany him to Shiloh any more until the child was old enough to be taken there and given to the Lord. When that time came she prepared for the sacrifice. Many a mother would have shrunk from making it. She would have said, "The dear little thing is so young he needs his mother's care, and God does not require impossibilities." She would have said, "Eli is a good man, but he is too old to take care of my little son; he doesn't even know how to take care of his own sons, for 'they made themselves vile and he restrained them not.'" She would have said, "there are Hophni and Phineas, two of the worst boys that ever lived, and they will ruin my son;" and the result would have been the child would have remained at home. But not thus with the devout Hannah. She said, "I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord forever." Taking with her three bullocks, and one ephah of flour and a bottle of wine, and with Samuel in her arms, she proceeded to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. The bullocks being slain on the altar, a necessary preparation for the solemn ceremony, the blood flowing as typical of the blood of the coming High Priest of the world, Hannah stood before Eli and said, "O, my Lord, as Thy soul liveth, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord; for this child I prayed and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore, also, I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

There have been many noble sacrifices made for

God in this life. I have told you of Abraham offering Isaac; of Jephthah offering his daughter; but if there is anything nobler in sacred or profane history than this (save of course the sacrifice of Christ) I know not what it is. O, woman! behold in Hannah one of the fairest representatives your sex has ever had. Sir Walter Scott calls woman a "ministering angel." Behold her here an angel ministering at the altar, the sacrifice being her own, her only son.

The arms of Eli received the innocent and beautiful boy—

'That was a sight in heaven, that child
A scene which might have well beguiled
Even haughty Eblis of a sigh
For glories past and peace gone by.'

and as he reposèd beneath the white beard and flowing locks of the aged priest the two might be compared to one of those statues of antiquity in which the cherub form of the god of love is enfolded in the arms of Father Time.

At the close of the dedication, Hannah, instead of crying (as most mothers would have done) so that she could not speak, broke forth into a joyous ode, which for beauty, poetic fire, and real merit may be regarded as the equal of the song of Miriam, the triumphal strains of Deborah, or the finest efforts of the genius of David.

This ode of itself shows her to have been a woman of exalted gifts and attainments. Her song o'er, she bade adieu to her dear boy and returned to her deso-

late home. But how shall I describe her feelings when she reached it? Mother, have you ever been called upon to bury a young child, and after the funeral to return home? Can you forget how everything spoke of the lost one—the vacant hall, the empty crib, the halfworn shoe, the broken toy? Oh! for the time that very house seemed a grave and you the sufferer of a living death. Some such feelings had Hannah when she returned to what had been her home, but whose light was to all appearance forever extinguished.

But when Hannah came to herself, when she had time for reflection, she found that she had ample cause for gratitude to God.

Her reproach was taken away and she was recognized throughout Israel as the honored of God.

While her own home was darker, the temple of the Lord was brighter because of her son. While other boys were growing up in wickedness, while the sons of the high priest Eli met a horrible death, what was the good news she heard from Shiloh? It was that Samuel was trimming the lamps, and lighting the sacrificial fires of the tabernacle. Here is a lesson for us in regard to receiving children into the church. Samuel was not only received by Eli, but put to work. "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod." Children may become Christians at a very early age, and when they are should not be kept back.

Some of the brightest geniuses in the ministry have united with the church when they were little children. Rev. Dr. Tucker of New York at eleven; Rev. Dr.

James B. Taylor of Virginia at eleven: Rev. Dr. Samson, late president of Columbia college, at eleven; Robt Hall, the glory of the British pulpit, at twelve—this is the way the record runs. Roger Williams, the apostle of religious liberty, whose statue stands in the capitol at Washington side by side with our presidents, said at the close of his eventful life, “From my childhood, now about three score years, the Father of lights and mercies touched my soul with a love to himself, to his only begotten Son, the true Lord Jesus, and to his holy Scripture.”

While the boy Samuel served in the tabernacle his mother made him an annual visit, and on each occasion would carry him a present made with her own hands. “Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.”

We can well imagine the interest which Samuel took in this gift. We can see him turn aside from the splendid trappings and vestments of the tabernacle, and going to some retired spot look at that garment and say, as the tears of affection streamed down his cheeks, “This was made by my mother, her own precious hands first wove this cloth and then fashioned it into this coat for me,” and he utters perhaps some such words as the captive Jews uttered in after ages by the waters of Babylon, “If I forget thee, oh my mother, may my right hand forget its cunning, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not my mother above my chief joy.” Young men love your mothers. I have often been impressed with

what is related of an Indian. He was asked if he were rowing his wife and mother in the same boat across a dangerous stream, and one had to be lost, which one he would save? He replied his mother, for, said he, "a man can have another wife, but he can never have but one mother." She not only had a son serving God in his house, but she lived to see that son become one of the most illustrious of men, the last and best judge of Israel for twenty years, the most honored of the prophets, and the maker of kings. He became a great author, having composed the book of Ruth, one of the most beautiful productions of the ages; and also the book of Judges and the first book of Samuel, while thousands of earth's population have been honored with his name, and have delighted to wear it. Hannah was also blessed in that she had other sons and daughters to cheer her old age. Two remarks are strikingly true of Samuel as complimentary to his mother. When at the pinnacle of greatness he never forgot her. No truly great man ever does. It is a well-known fact that president Garfield went from the log cabin to the White House. In his boyhood he was cared for by the manual labor of his dear old mother. When he was inaugurated president of the United States the dear old woman stood by his side, and after delivering his inaugural address and taking the oath of office, turning aside from ex-presidents, judges of the supreme court, senators and the representative of kings, and even his wife, he first of all embraced and kissed the mother who had done so much for him. This incident I witnessed, and it filled my heart with

admiration for the man. Are there not some of us here to-night who would give a world for a glimpse of our mothers as we saw them in our childhood, and who exclaim with Elizabeth Akers Allen :

“ Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight,
Make me a child again just for to-night ;
Mother come back from the echoless shore
Take me again to your heart as of yore ;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair :
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep
Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.”

Such a man was Samuel. He loved and visited his mother in her old age. The second remark is, Samuel never forgot his home, but in his old age, after a life of distinguished public services as priest, prophet and judge, selected Ramah his old home as his residence, where he became president of the school of the prophets. There is something pathetic and beautiful in the disposition we all have as the years roll on to return to the place of our nativity. There is no music so sweet as the sounds we heard in our childhood.

Napoleon Bonaparte, after filling the world with his fame, returned to Brienne, where, hearing the bell that had called him to school when a lad, he covered his face with his hands and burst into a flood of tears. Samuel, whose father was a shepherd, desired to go back to those scenes made dear to him in his youth, where he could hear again those pastoral bells “ whose drowsy tinklings called the distant folds.” And as we think now of our childhood’s home, it may be in-

some far distant State, we seem to feel again the touch of its vanished hands, and the faint sweet smell of its jasmine flowers; while as to the bells that called us to church and school, Thomas Moore has beautifully said:

Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells
Of youth, and home, and that sweet time
When last we heard their softening chime.
Those joyous hours have passed away
And many a heart that then was gay
Within the tomb now darkly dwells,
And hears no more those evening bells."

Though Hannah lived at that remote period of the world she did not pass from the stage of action without leaving important lessons for succeeding generations to learn, and which should impress this congregation.

First, she taught the duty of prayer. It is needless to discuss the philosophy of prayer. The sceptic who opposes it will perhaps be the first in a storm at sea, or amid the shock of battle, to ask God to have mercy upon his soul. But in other trials of life we need relief, and Hannah tells us where to go to find it. "Lord, to whom should we go but to thee; thou hast the words of eternal life." In her trouble she did not go to Elkanah, her husband, or to Eli, the high priest, but she went directly to God. Let us imitate her example, and take our griefs to the Lord in prayer.

She taught us also the power of prayer. Her son Samuel stands as a grand, white, stainless monument

in history, showing the power of a mother's prayer. "Asked of the Lord," was his name, and so long as the book of Samuel remains a part of the canon of Scripture, even though every other part were torn away, we must still believe in the power of earnest prayer. Happily the whole New Testament coincides with the teaching of Hannah, saying, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

She taught, in the next place, the manner of prayer. She did not come before God with a mere form of words. "She poured out her soul before God." Like Jacob, she wrestled with God and would not let him go without his blessing. She prayed believingly, for as soon as the "amen" died away on her lips, the smile of triumph lighted up her hitherto sombre countenance. But while her prayer was not a mere form, it was a form of words.

Dr. Dagg, in his Moral Science, lays down the principle that nothing is, strictly speaking, prayer unless uttered. It may, he says, be only the movement of the lips, as in the case of Hannah, but the words must be expressed. God is willing to bless us, but must be asked. "In all things," said the Apostle, "with prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God."

The last lesson taught us by this great and good woman is the secret of true greatness in men. It is maternal influence. Nearly every great man who ever lived has had a good mother, who has impressed her own genius on the child. Sir Walter Scott's mother

was talented, well educated, and a great lover of poetry and painting. The mother of Napoleon Bonaparte was noted for beauty, goodness, and energy; Lord Bacon's mother was gifted and pious; the mother of Washington was pious, pure and true, says the record; while "the mother of John Wesley was remarkable for her intelligence, piety and executive ability, so that she has been called the mother of Methodism." On the other hand the mother of Lord Byron was a termagant, the mother of Nero a murderer, and the mother of John A. Murrell was a thief. O how horrible will it be for a mother in hell to be reproached through eternity by the curses of her lost son, as he cries in hopeless agony, "You, the mother that bore me, brought me to this place of torment." But ah! happy indeed will that mother be who, elevated to her seat in glory, shall behold one after the other of her children borne by angels in the bosom of God as the refrain of their joyous song shall be:

"A mother's holy prayer,
A mother's hand and gentle tear
Have led the wanderer there!"



LECTURE XII.

ABIGAIL, THE WIFE OF DAVID.

THE character of Abigail introduces us to the most interesting period of Jewish history. It has been the design of these lectures not only to describe prominent women of the Bible, and draw practical lessons from them, but to give a somewhat connected account of sacred history, with allusions to the great men selected by the Divine Being as leaders in theocratic movements. The women of the patriarchal period brought out the characters of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Those of the Judges' reign exhibited Boaz, Barak, Jephthah, Samson, and Eli. Under the Kings we have already had glimpses of Samuel and Saul, and we come now to the time when the wicked King, under the spell of the witch of Endor, having gone down on the heights of Mount Gilboa, David the Shepherd King rises into power.

Abigail was remarkable for many things—for her personal attractions, for her unfortunate first marriage, for her fidelity under adverse circumstances, and for her happy second marriage to an illustrious man. I speak first of her personal attractions. She is represented as “a woman of a beautiful countenance.” Say what we will of beauty, it is a wonderful power in the

world, and though it is a "fatal gift," as this story illustrates, it is one by no means to be despised. The varieties of beauty of form and feature both have their admirers, but the preference is always given to beauty of feature, and such was the possession of Abigail, "a woman of a beautiful countenance." Says Addison, "the head has the most beautiful appearance as well as the highest station in a human figure. Nature has laid out all her art in beautifying the face; she has touched it with vermillion, planted in it a double row of ivory, made it the seat of smiles and blushes, lighted it up, and enlivened it with the brightness of the eyes, hung it on each side with curious organs of sense, given it airs and graces that cannot be described, and surrounded it with such a flowing shade of hair as sets all its beauties in the most agreeable light. In short she seems to have designed the head as the cupola to the most glorious of her works." But what seems to be beauty is a delusion unless associated with higher endowments. An ignorant, silly woman with a pretty face is an object not to be admired, but where beauty is associated with intellectual worth you have a combination as desirable as it is rare. Such attractions did Abigail possess, "of a beautiful countenance;" she was also "a woman of good understanding." In our Southern land we have types of beauty that cannot be excelled by the blondes of the North of Europe, the beauties of Italy or the "girls of Cadiz," but let us see to it that their minds are trained. Too much attention has been given to the education of men to the neglect of women. The States

found great institutions for boys, but the girls are left to the tender mercies of private schools, and pedagogues whose sole aim is too often to make a display, and put money in their pockets.

In addition to her other attractions Abigail had piety, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is more lustrous than the diamonds that decorate the delicate fingers of our belles, shone as an ornament of gold about her head, and chains about her neck."

It is not strange that such a woman had to marry. A young fellow by the name of Nabal, of the city of Maon, was the man who led her to the altar, but her marriage was a most unfortunate one; Nabal was about the most unsuitable man for such a woman that could have been found in the whole land. The inspired word tells us that "the man was churlish, and evil in his doings." You want no other description of him than the fact that he was churlish; several meanings are affixed to this term, but all go to show that Nabal was a villain. It means harsh, rude, uncivil, brutal: we sometimes speak of a "bear of a man," and Shakespeare uses the word in that sense, "churlish as the bear."

It also means avaricious, selfish. "This sullen churlish thief," says King. Nabal thought only of his possessions, and worshipped almighty gold. He belonged to that class of men concerning whom it has been said:

"The man may breathe but never lives
Who e'er receives but nothing gives—
Creation's blot, creation's blank,
Whom none can love and none can thank."

Churlish has a still further signification, it means unmanageable, unpliant. The generous man is as pliable as the osier, Nabal was as stubborn as steel. Fixed in his miserable ways no one could have any influence with him; even his servants said that "a man could not speak to him even when he desired to impart something to the interest of the master."

Worse than all he was a drunkard. "Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken." Only think of an ill-tempered, selfish, miserly, drunken husband, such, alas, as many a good woman has at this day and time, and you have a picture of Nabal. To drunkenness must be added profanity, and to have a husband who would use horrid oaths in the presence of his pious wife, it seems to me would be punishment enough, and yet how many good women have to bear this curse. "Excuse me," said a gentleman walking the street with a lady, when he had accidentally used an oath. "O trouble not yourself," she replied, "you know I am married."

This wretch was likewise, of course, an unbeliever, "a son of Belial," who instead of worshipping the God of his fathers, bowed his impious knee to the god of this world.

His very name, Nabal, told what he was—foolish, stupid—"as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name and folly is with him."

But now the question arises why did she marry such a man? She did not know all these things beforehand. Besides he belonged to a great and noble family. He was a descendant of the illustrious Caleb, who entered

with Joshua the land of Canaan, that distinguished servant of God, to whom He gave a new spirit.

Blood will tell in matrimonial affairs, and there are hundreds and thousands of fair women now waiting to wreck their hopes on some degenerate son of a noble family, flourishing his coat of arms; or on some foreign count, who has not money enough to buy the necessary oil with which to lubricate his flowing locks. But the real reason is yet to be given—*He was rich*. The man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats, besides other property “in Carmel.” She is not the only woman who has sold herself for paltry gold. But even gold might not have prevailed with the fair Abigail, had it not been for her parents; the match was made by them.

O fathers and mothers, be careful lest you dispose of your daughters in this way. The parents of Circassian girls who sell them in the streets of Constantinople at auction, are not more culpable than you, who let your fair and innocent daughters go in marriage to the highest bidder.

As may be supposed Abigail led a wretched life, spurned, insulted, and it may be beaten (for what will not a drunken brute do?). She still clung to the man to whom she had sworn to be faithful.

Behold here a noble instance of wifely fidelity. She did not go back to her father, or seek to drown her troubles by a giddy, godless life in fashionable society, but she remained at home as his helper and his friend. We have often seen a similar devotion on the part of women; men who have been arrested for theft or

murder, or even adultery, and brought into court to be tried, have had by their sides, while all others were turning away from them, the wan and wasted forms of trustful, sympathizing wives.

During my stay of a week at the Executive mansion of Kentucky, the Governor came out of the parlor into the sitting room one morning with his face bathed in tears, and exclaimed, "May God forbid that I should ever pass through such another ordeal; a woman has been pleading for her husband just sentenced for twenty years to the Penitentiary; such eloquence I never heard. She got upon her knees, then threw herself on the floor, clasped and kissed my feet, and begged in such a way that I had to retreat, only replying, while striving to control my feelings, that I was in no condition to decide a question of State, but that I would consider her request in a more composed moment, and do all that I conscientiously could for her husband." A woman's tears have often proved more powerful than Juries, Judges, and Governors, and wives are ever ready to shed them for their husbands, however vile. They are faithful to the men who win their hands. They are "like the insects caught by the poor glittering of a garish flame, and oh ! the wings once scorched, the brightest star lures them no more, and by the fatal light they cling till death."

If their fidelity be thus exhibited when the husband is unworthy, who can tell its sacredness when the unfortunate husband is innocent. Says a fine writer, "There is a painting in the Louvre—a painting of desolation, despair and love; it represents the night of

crucifixion. The world is wrapped in shadow; the stars are dead; and yet in the darkness is seen a kneeling form. It is Mary Magdalene with loving lips and hands pressing against the bleeding feet of Christ. Thus is it with true wives; the skies were never dark enough, nor starless enough, the bolts of heaven never lurid enough, and the arrows of slander never thick enough, to drive a devoted woman from her husband's side."

During one of the German wars the most horrible atrocities were threatened by a General who captured Weinsburg. The men were all to be slain and their property destroyed, but the women were notified that they would be permitted to leave and to take with them whatever they could carry on their backs.

Nine o'clock in the morning was fixed as the time of their departure. When the hour arrived, it was discovered that each woman went away bearing a husband, father, brother, son or lover, on her back. This devotion so touched the Conqueror that he released all, and spared the town. Upon the hill thus made forever memorable a beautiful monument has been erected, on which these simple words are inscribed "Woman's Fidelity." During the slavery of Abigail to this man Nabal, an incident occurred that gave to her her greatest renown.

David, who had been hunted by Saul "like a partridge upon the mountains," had fled first from one place to another till he had reached the Wilderness of Paran, when he became like Jephthah, a sort of free-booter, with six hundred men under his command.

This being near to Nabal's flocks he had protected them, till being destitute of supplies he sent to the churl for a present of a few animals to keep himself and followers from starving. This the churl of course declined. He said, "Who is David and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master; shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

David, incensed at the conduct of Nabal, whose property he had been standing guard over, and smarting under the insult offered both himself and father, cried out, "Gird ye every man his sword," and proceeded at once, "breathing threatening and slaughter," determined to destroy Nabal and all that he had, save women and children, from the face of the earth. One of the young men informed Abigail of the impending destruction, and though she had an opportunity now of escaping from the clutches of the inhuman monster, without saying a word to her drunken and stupid husband, she went out to meet the infuriated David, with such presents as she thought might appease him, "two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs." On meeting the angry David "she hasted and lighted off the ass and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground and fell at his feet and said: "Upon me my lord let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in

thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him ; but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord whom thou didst send : now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies and they that seek evil to my lord be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it be given unto the young men that follow my lord: I pray thee forgive the trespass of thine handmaid, for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God: and the souls of thine enemies then shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.” Was not that a beautiful speech coming from the lips of a beautiful woman ? It captivated David. As his own harp had appeased Saul, the sweet

toned voice of Abigail exorcised the demon of revenge, and woke the angel that was slumbering in his bosom.

And David said to Abigail: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand," and he told her that had it not been for her, upon his oath Nabal would have been destroyed, with all his men-servants. He then took her presents and said, "Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." Joyfully she returned to her home—what to find? Her husband was in a drunken frolic, so that she could not even speak to him of the deliverance she had wrought. In the morning, after he had slept off the effects of his debauch, she broke the news to him. It had one good effect, not designed by the oppressed and faithful woman. It frightened him to death.

"It came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, that his wife had told him these things that his heart died within him, and he became as stone, and it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal that he died." Now Abigail was free.

There are two ways by which a woman can get rid of a mean husband: The first is by divorce, but that is a dreadful alternative, and should not be resorted to except under the direst circumstances. The Bible puts down but one real cause, although for others, the

Apostle says, husband and wife may separate. Every remedy should be tried, including, in case of brutality, the whipping-post established by law.

But the Word of God and the State have provided divorce as a relief when every other remedy fails, and I have no sort of sympathy with the prejudice which sometimes exists against what are called "grace" widows. The expression is a French term, and only means that the husband having proved faithless to his nuptial vows, the State comes to the assistance of the poor woman, protects her, and pronounces her a widow "by the *grace* of the King" or government. But Abigail did not seek divorce; she took him "for better or for worse," and though he proved the worst of men she still clung to him.

The other way of escape is by death. Sometimes it is the death of the woman. The tender plant, bruised and torn by the cruel hand that should have nourished and protected it, withers and dies. Death is the great divorcer. In the grave no unkind words are heard, no merciless blows are received. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." There are thousands of good women chained to the oars of wedded life, for whom it would be infinitely better,

"To lie in their graves where the head, heart, and breast,
From care, labor, and sorrow forever should rest."

But very often it is the man who dies. His dissipation leads to his ruin and death. It was so in this case. Then it is a delightful retrospect for the wife

that she did the best she could to the last, and that he was removed by the hand of Providence.

Abigail did not remain a widow long, and who can blame her?

As soon as David heard that Nabal was dead he sent his servants down to Carmel with an offer of marriage to Abigail, which was readily accepted.

It may be said that in marrying David she did not get a perfect man. This is true, in many respects; David was very bad, and some of his deeds blacken the catalogue of human guilt. But much may be excused on account of the times and circumstances in which he lived. If you would see the strong points of his character, look at him as the faithful subject of Saul, who though persecuted nearly to death by the wicked monarch, still loved him and lamented his death in a beautiful eulogy saying: "How are the mighty fallen! Ye mountains of Gilboa let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor field offerings, for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph;" or hear David as his father's heart weeps over the death of a disobedient son, saying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son;" or witness his great bravery not only in meeting the defiant Goliath, but as a mighty man of war fighting the battles of the Lord; above all look at his Psalms,

which have furnished devotional expressions for pious hearts the world over.

Much has been said about the origin of the harp.

'Tis believed that this harp which I now wake for thee,
Was a siren of old that lived under the sea,
Who often at midnight through the bright waters roved,
To meet on the green shore a youth whom she loved ;
But she loved him in vain for he left her to weep,
And all the night long her fair tresses to steep
Till heaven looked with pity on true love so warm,
And changed to this soft harp the fair maiden's form."

That is a mere legend, but the true origin of the harp was with David. What Pollok said of Byron was emphatically true of him, "He touched his harp, and nations heard entranced." It is said that when the fabled Orpheus struck his lyre, inanimate nature responded; that at the music of his "golden shell" the wheel of Ixion stopped; Tantalus forgot the thirst that tormented him, the vulture ceased to prey on the vitals of Prometheus, and Pluto and Proserpine lent a favoring ear to his prayers.

But David's harp really accomplished greater things, drove away the madness of Saul, soothed the troubled breasts of millions, exorcised the demon of temptation, brought a whole world into sympathetic communication with the Father of Spirits.

Ah! but you exclaim, what about Uriah and Bathsheba! Against the awful lapse of character indicated by these names I oppose the 51st Psalm, which breathes the very essence of true penitence. Purged

with hyssop, washed, a clean heart and a right spirit given, the joy of salvation restored, he was himself again, with the exception that the remembrance of his sin embittered the whole of his life. The bruised reed was not broken, but now gave forth sweeter notes than ever before.

But while contemplating his greatness let it not be forgotten that it was Abigail, his devoted, wife, who under God, made him in great part what he was. Up to the time of his marriage with her he had been irregular in his habits, and a mere freebooter. Soon after Saul died he ascended the throne with pomp and ceremony. Abigail brought him not only "a fortune in herself," but heaps of gold, for she was very rich; and with this to support his establishment David became a different man, fixed upon his abode in Hebron, and after seven years settled in Jerusalem, which was ever afterwards to be known as "the City of the Great King."

The ladies of all generations may derive from the history of Abigail important suggestions on the subject of marriage.

Never marry for "blood"—that is, merely to be allied to a distinguished name. While women should not marry beneath themselves, they should not go too far above the standing of their own families. I read a few days ago of a German Count who is engaged as a day laborer in the West, his business being to chop wood and look after stock. Besides, aristocracy in this country is a very questionable heritage. Saxe well says:

“ Of all the notable things on earth
The queerest one is pride of birth
Among our fierce democracy.
A bridge across a hundred years,
Without a prop to save it from sneers,
Not even a couple of rotten piers,
A thing for laughter, fleers and jeers,
Is American Aristocracy.”

John B. Gough used to say that families who boasted of their ancestry were like hills of potatoes, the best part of them are under ground.

Never marry for riches.—Nine times out of ten you will not get them, and if you do your companion may soon squander them and then be utterly unfitted to make a living. Let women as well as men remember that “ they that would be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition.”

Above all, never marry a drunkard.—He will break your heart long before you can reform him. Nearest to hell perhaps of anything in this world is the home that is cursed with intemperance. When a woman marries a drunkard she unites herself to a lunatic, for the man who drinks “ puts an enemy into his mouth that steals away his brains.” There is no telling what such a madman will do. Men who when sober are good natured, kind and true, have when drunk done things as violent and outrageous as were ever committed by the worst lunatics confined in our Asylums. When they perform no deeds of violence they yet

wear out the lives of their loved ones by the (perhaps) less-to-be-desired process of slow decay.

“ Go to the mother’s side
And her crushed spirit cheer,
Thine own deep anguish hide,
Wipe from her cheek the tear ;
Mark her dimm’d eye, her furrow’d brow,
The gray that streaks her dark hair now,
Her toil-worn frame, her trembling limb,
And trace the ruin back to him
Whose plighted faith in early youth
Promised eternal love, and truth ;
But who foresworn, hath yielded up
That promise to the deadly cup,
And led her down from love and light,
From all that made her pathway bright,
And chained her there, mid want and strife,
That lowly thing, a Drunkard’s Wife,
And stamped on childhood’s brow so mild,
That withering blight, a Drunkard’s Child.”

Lastly, never marry a God-defying infidel.—I do not say that you must not marry an unconverted person, for such you may be instrumental in leading to the Saviour. “The believing wife shall sanctify the unbelieving husband.” But if you have a spark of love to God in your heart you will be made miserable by being bound in indissoluble chains to one whose pride is to insult God, and ridicule religion. Abigail’s husband was “a son of Belial,” and “what fellowship hath light with darkness or Christ with Belial.”

And whether you ever marry or not, God grant that you may all form a part of that glorious company

which constitutes the mystical bride of Jesus Christ; and that you may be ever ready, with lamps trimmed and burning, so that when the cry is made "Behold the bridegroom cometh," you may be prepared to meet him and go with him to the marriage supper above.



THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

LECTURE XIII.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, SOLOMON'S ROYAL GUEST.

IT has been said that the greatest country in the world is ruled by a woman. While we Americans may question this declaration, there is no denying the fact that the most beautiful country of ancient times was ruled by a woman superior to any of modern times, for she received the special commendation of the Son of God. That country was Sheba, and that woman the "Queen of the South," Solomon's royal guest. I shall first speak of the country, and then of the queen.

Sheba was situated in the southwestern part of Asia, between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. It was called in ancient times Sabea, in more modern times Arabia Felix, and to-day is known as Yemen, "the country of the right hand." It has always constituted one of the brightest themes of the poets as "Araby the Blest." It was in the extreme South of Arabia; covered a section about as large as the State of Texas; was bounded north by El Hejaz, east by Hadramant, and the great Arabian desert, South by the Gulf of Aden, and west by the Red Sea.

It was noted for its magnificent scenery. Through

its entire length ran a chain of mountains, with beautiful and fertile valleys stretching in every direction, irrigated by mountain streams, and producing the finest fruits and spices in the world.

It has been fitly named "the region of balsamic trees," for the slopes of the loftier mountains are covered with luxurious forests, many of the trees yielding gums that are shipped to all parts of the world.

The orange, lemon, banana, apricot, and other fruits abound, and it is from here that Mocha coffee comes, pronounced by epicures the finest, grain or ground. It was the land where birds of "heavenly plumage fair" perched and sang in cinnamon trees; where the antelope in beauty leaped from crag to crag, and where the dear gazelle gladdened all with its soft black eye;—the land spoken of by Thomas Moore when he said :

"Whose air is balm, whose ocean spreads
O'er coral rocks and amber beds;
Whose mountains fragrant by the beam
Of warm sun with diamonds teem;
Whose rivulets are like rich brides
Lovely with gold beneath their tides;
Whose sandal groves, and bowers of spice,
Might be a Peri's paradise."

Such is the wonderful land which for thousands of years has been governed by Semitic tribes on the monarchical plan, "the first child born in a certain number of noble families after the succession of the monarch, being the heir presumptive to the throne."

At the time of which I speak it was richer than it has

ever been since. It held the keys of commerce between Europe and India, and Egypt and Syria; and held commercial relations with Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans.

Of the “Queen of the South,” who ruled over this ancient Eldorado, but a brief account is given in the sacred Scriptures. It is a singular fact that the names of some of the most remarkable women of the Bible have been omitted. We are told to “remember Lot’s wife,” but her name is a blank. Job’s wife, who told her husband to “curse God and die,” is also very properly nameless.

But I should be glad to know the name of the good woman of Shunem; of the widow of Sarepta; of Jephthah’s daughter; and particularly of “the Queen of Sheba.” If we may believe Arabian tradition her name was Balkis, but as “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” though it had been “Barkis” her virtues would be none the less fragrant.

The Bible is also silent on the subject of her beauty; but I have no doubt she was all that could be desired in this regard.

I have seen one beautiful queen. It was Margaret of Italy, the wife of Humbert. Driving out one afternoon to the Pincio hill, I saw an immense cavalcade approaching. I said to Dr. G. B. Taylor, who was with me, “What does that mean?” He replied, “We are going to meet the queen, prepare for a bow; she is quick to detect strangers and always bows to them,” whereupon I straightened myself up; and just then a carriage with scarlet coverings, drawn by four horses

gaily caparisoned, and surrounded by out-riders, came near. Then appeared the lovely form of Margaret, who gave me one of the sweetest bows I ever received. Margaret has the reputation all over Europe of being beautiful, and I imagine that Balkis was just such a woman. Baron de Larry, a surgeon general of Napoleon's army in Egypt, said of the people of her country (quoted by Headley), "Their physical structure is in all respects more perfect than that of Europeans, their figure robust and elegant, their intelligence proportionate to their physical perfection."

But Balkis was chiefly remarkable for something else—for her visit to Solomon. It was this that caused her history to appear in the sacred Scriptures; it was this that attracted the attention of our Saviour to her character.

Three things claim our attention in connection with this royal visitor,—her coming; her sojourn; and her return.

Why did she leave her beautiful home for far-distant Judea? Not from motives of mere curiosity. This is the prevailing impulse with many women, which leads sometimes to their ruin. It led Eve from the side of Adam to the forbidden tree. Paul knew what he was talking about when he said that women should be "keepers at home." Neither did she go in quest of fortune—to refill exhausted coffers made so by a life of extravagance. She took with her presents for her host sufficient to sustain a royal establishment. She did not travel as a gift taker but as a gift bestower. She did not come to promote a matrimonial

alliance with a great monarch. Royal personages have been known to do this; but Solomon was then a married man and at the height of his piety and influence. Not one word has ever been spoken that could reflect on the womanly delicacy of this fair queen. She did not come on a fool's errand, for it is expressly declared by eternal Truth that she came "to see the wisdom of Solomon;" and it was not his worldly wisdom merely that she wished to witness, although everything shows that she was herself a woman of exalted genius and attainments. The wisdom which she came to learn was that spoken of by Solomon when he said, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her." It was that wisdom referred to when he says, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This is expressly declared in the narrative, "When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord she came to prove him with hard questions." Noble woman ! Her beautiful nature attuned like the Æolian harp to divine harmonies, and refusing to respond to the touches of heathen philosophers, but still longing to break forth in praises to the eternal God, she concluded to go to the ends of the earth, if she might thereby find out the true object of worship which her soul craved !

She came therefore for a purely religious purpose.

Of how few woman travellers can this be affirmed ! Think of the Empress of China crossing the ocean and coming to President Cleveland simply to find out something about the name of the Lord !

Thousands of our countrywomen are to-day crossing the ocean in magnificent steamers to view the Old World. They are thronging Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, the National Gallery, the British Museum. They drive through Hyde Park. They sail up the beautiful Rhine, loiter around the French and German capitals; sit down on the lofty crags, and in the midst of the sublime forests of Switzerland; cross over the Alps, stand on the Appenines, and risk in midsummer a few days in sunny Italy, but is there one who does this that she may find out something “concerning the name of the Lord ?” Nay, is not the name of the Lord that which above every other thing they forget in their travels, engaging in much of their sightseeing and dissipation on Sunday ?

But going from “Araby the Blest” to Palestine is not like going from America to Europe, or from Montgomery to San Francisco. She had no railroad train, no Pullman palace cars, no fast-sailing steamers. She had to go a distance of twelve hundred miles on a camel’s back, through desert tracks, over dangerous rivers, through districts often beset by highwaymen—

“Through tangled juniper beds of reeds,
Through many a fen where the serpent feeds.”

Still she started on her perilous journey, which

it must have taken several months to accomplish. Writers on the subject suppose she travelled the road now used between Yemen and Jerusalem, and represent her as reaching in a few weeks Mecca, the shrine of Mahomet, where then stood a pagan temple with four hundred images; in a month as coming to Medina where Mahomet's tomb now stands, "with its four hundred columns and three hundred lamps constantly burning." She passes Mount Sinai, around whose lofty brow the lightnings played when God gave the law to Moses; gazes on the Dead Sea, on whose shore Lot's wife had turned to a pillar of salt, and in whose capacious bosom the cities of the plain found their terrible grave. She next crosses the Jordan, whose waters were to be honored above all of earth for being selected as the emblematic grave of the Redeemer; and at last she comes in sight of "the City of the great King." Her approach having doubtless been heralded, Solomon goes out to meet her, and catching sight of the magnificent caravan with camel loads of spices exclaims, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"

I am now brought to speak of her sojourn at the Israelitish Court. Solomon received her with all the pomp befitting so distinguished a visitor.

All crowned heads are noted for the gorgeous way in which they entertain their royal guests. Ample resources are at their disposal, though their subjects may be starving for bread. The Duke of Coburg, who pre-

sides over one of the smallest of the German States, keeps one hundred blooded horses and thirty carriages. The Emperor of Austria has in his stables at Vienna seven hundred blooded steeds with vehicles to correspond. A simple dinner given by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle is heralded all over the world as a great event. It is said that Cicero and a friend went to Lucullus one day and told him they would dine with him if he would make no preparations, and permit them to take an ordinary meal. He agreed, but they insisted that he should remain with them till dinner, and give no orders to his servants. After reaching the palace Lucullus remarked to a servant, "We dine in the hall of Apollo to-day." Nothing more was said. Imagine Cicero's surprise on going into the elegantly decorated hall, arranged for the occasion, and sitting down to a dinner that cost \$10,000. On enquiring how such a great feast was provided without notice he was informed that guests were graded by the "halls," and the Apollo was understood for the most eminent guests. All that was necessary was to notify the servants which hall was selected, and the table was prepared accordingly.

To give an idea of the grandeur of Solomon's table it took to supply it for one ordinary day thirty stall-fed oxen, two hundred fat sheep, besides innumerable deer and fowl. We can imagine what it must have been on this extra occasion. Royal entertainments usually consist of grand receptions, music and dancing, operatic theatrical performances, driving and hunting. We are not assured that any of these things were in-

dulged in on the present occasion. Dancing certainly was not, for in Israel and "Araby the Blest" dancing was a pastime confined to the lowest and most unfashionable classes.

Solomon in his entertainment had regard to the wishes of his guest. She came to see "Solomon in all his glory" and was gratified. She saw gold as plentiful as stones in the streets of Jerusalem; gazed upon the magnificent temple rising two hundred feet above the top of Mt. Zion; saw the two hundred targets and three hundred shields, and various vessels of gold; the ivory throne with its twelve carved lions; looked on Solomon's palace, the most gorgeous in the world; saw the queen's palace, the house of the forest of Lebanon, the porch of Judgment;—all so studded with pillars, so glittering with gold, so rich with carvings of beasts, birds and flowers. She saw the gardens of spikenard, and saffron pomegranates and cinnamon, "the orchards planted with all kinds of fruits," and beautiful with "fountains and pools of water." And as evidence of the superiority of the establishment to any other court, she saw the thousand chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

More important than all this she heard the wisdom of Solomon, that "excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East," and all the wisdom of Egypt, showing that he was "wiser than Ethan, than Herman, than Chalcol and Darda"—than any man of his age.

Coming from the land of flowers he doubtless interested her greatly in botany, for he could, says the in-

spired writer, "speak of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." He also explained zoology, as he spoke "of beasts, and of fowl, and creeping things, and of fishes."

But above everything else he taught her the true wisdom "concerning the name of the Lord." He taught her how that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" how our first parents fell; how a Saviour was provided in the "seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head;" how patriarchs had kept alive sacrificial fires till Israel became the father of the chosen race; explained to her the ten commandments given on Sinai; told her how the temple service was designed to honor the true God, and prepare the way for his future brother according to the flesh, Jesus, the son of David, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and it may be he told her how even she was connected with his nation, as Sheba, the son of Abraham by Katurah, had wandered off, and settled in the country which bears her name and from which she came.

When all this magnificence, all this wisdom, burst upon her enraptured senses, she was so overcome that "there was no more spirit in her," and falling low at the feet of "the Grand Monarque of Israel," she exclaims, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words till I came and my eyes had seen it; and behold ! the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee and that hear thy wisdom." So saying she bestowed upon him rare and costly gifts," an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones," to the amount of about \$2,088,000 ! But the question arises: How did she hear in her far distant heathen land of Solomon and the true religion ? I answer, by means of commerce. Solomon's ships were plowing the Red Sea, and great caravans were going annually from Sheba to Palestine laden with gums and spices, and returning with "corn, wine and oil." Commerce is the great pioneer not only of civilization but of religion. It is commerce, and commerce alone, under God, that has opened the ports of the heathen world to the introduction of Christianity; and my greatest hope for the conversion of the world, speaking as to instrumentalities, lies in these channels. More attention should be given to the conversion of seamen, whose very business makes them, when Christians, successful missionaries.

The increase of commerce results in an increase of converts. Steamships now go to all parts of the habitable globe, and electric wires will soon hold daily communication with all the nations that sit in the region and shadow of death. Thus steam and electricity will constitute the angels predicted in Scripture, who are to fly in the midst of the heavens to all parts of the world, preaching the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

But all things earthly have an end, and the time

came when the Queen of Sheba had to return. "She turned and went to her own country." She did not go away empty handed. "King Solomon, gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." She came away a convert to the new religion. This we infer from her words to Solomon, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel," and from the fact that centuries after the Maccabees propagated a pure religion most successfully in Sheba, because it is supposed the Queen on her return told her subjects what she had learned, thus laying the foundation on which the pious servants of God worked.

When she died we know not; but one might think that the very Peris would mourn the departure of such a sister; and that their song, as recorded by Moore, would in part be appropriate for her:

"Farewell—farewell to thee Araby's daughter,
(Thus warbled a Peri beneath the dark sea,)
No pearl ever lay under Oman's green water
More pure in its shell than thy spirit in thee.

Farewell, be it ours to embellish thy pillow
With everything beauteous that grows in the deep,
Each flower of the rock, and each gem of the billow,
Shall sweeten thy bed and illumine thy sleep.

Around thee shall glisten the loveliest amber,
That ever the sorrowing sea bird has wept,
With many a shell in whose hollow wreathed chamber,
We Peris of ocean by moonlight have slept.

We'll dive where the gardens of coral lie darkling,
And plant all the rosiest stems at thy head,
Will seek where the sands of the Caspian are sparkling,
And gather thin gold to strew over thy bed."

We hear of her no more till our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. On an important occasion he said to the people gathered around him, "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment and condemn this generation, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here."

We of the present time would do well to heed these words. Solomon was a great king, but Jesus Christ is King of kings." Solomon was rich, but "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Solomon was wise, but Jesus Christ is "the only wise God our Saviour." The Queen of Sheba had to go twelve hundred miles to see Solomon—Christ is here. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." There is only a step to Jesus, but some of you will not take it. Beware ! The time will come when the august throne shall be piled, the holy angels will surround it, a devouring fire shall go before it.

"All flesh is at once in the sight of the Lord,
And the doom of eternity hangs on his word."

But hark ! A lovely form appears that once graced this earth of ours. She "rises up in the Judgment"

and is poised in mid-air. She says not a word, but Jesus speaks. Pointing to her he exclaims: "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment, and condemn this generation, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here."

It is enough and you proceed to take the "lowest place."

O, sinner, ere that hour of doom escape for thy life! Take up thy march to the cross, where sits enthroned a greater than Solomon. Come to Jesus! The Queen of Sheba will then not rise up in the Judgment to condemn thee, but to welcome thee to a throne more gorgeous than Solomon's, and to a country more glorious than "Araby the Blest."

E
EZEBEL.

LECTURE XIV.

JEZEBEL,

THE HEATHEN QUEEN OF AN ISRAELITISH KING.

THE Israelites ever have been a strange and wonderful people. Signally blessed of God as his chosen nation, they have presented some of the mightiest and some of the meanest specimens of human character, occasionally being distinguished for exalted righteousness, and ever and anon guilty of the most unaccountable wickedness. Delivered from the house of bondage by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah, with that magnificent man Moses for a leader, who worked wondrous miracles that they might be convinced; with the presence of God manifested in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, they turned aside from such influences as these; longed for the flesh pots of Egypt, abused Moses for bringing them away, erected idolatrous images of worship, and insulted God until he swore in His wrath that they should not enter Canaan.

Forty years long he was grieved by them, till at last his besom of destruction caused the sands of the desert to be whitened with their bones. When the new generations took possession of Canaan, and all of God's promises as to the goodly land had been fulfilled, they

were rebellious; turned aside often to the gods of the land that still filled many of the "high places;" were guilty of the most abominable vices, became a prey to jealousies and rivalries among themselves, and that too when God was speaking to them by patriarch, by prophet, by angel, and by his own unmistakable voice. Some of the most illustrious leaders of Israel have had their names handed down to us tarnished by the foulest crimes. Abraham was not perfect; Jacob was a deceiver; Samson was the victim of a corrupt woman; David was guilty of a great double crime; Solomon married a daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, whose name is a synonym for the worst forms of idolatry; and Ahab married Jezebel, the wickedest woman in all the world. I propose to consider, first, Jezebel's character; secondly, her crimes; and thirdly her fearful but well-deserved curse. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Sidonians. That she was beautiful we may well believe; that she was gifted with a strong mind and unconquerable will, everything she did and said plainly shows; in this respect, as will be seen, she was quite the equal of Catherine de Medici, Lady Macbeth, or Bloody Mary. Her name could not have been more inappropriate: Jezebel, the same as the modern Isabella and Elizabeth, means Chaste, but she was a voluptuary, with all the meretricious arts of a wanton woman. "She painted her face, and tired her head." Her wardrobe was doubtless well stocked with false appliances to show off her person to advantage, and her dressing-case redolent with cosmetics, some ancient "bloom of

youth," or "balm of a thousand flowers." She was, doubtless, the chief ornament of the play-house, a leader in the dance, and with some sprig of the court a nocturnal rambler to *cafés*, theatre-parties, and club rooms. Courts are often the most corrupt places in the world. In proof of this, I need only refer to that of Belshazzar under the Old Testament, and that of Herod on a smaller scale, and of Nero on a larger, under the New Testament dispensation. To go outside the Bible, there has scarcely been a throne that has not been the centre of repeated debaucheries, and in the East, where the harem constitutes the chief attraction of the Monarch, you may well imagine what kind of a place a Sidonian palace would be for bringing up a young girl. In addition to everything else, Jezebel was an idolater. She was the daughter of one whose very name was "Man of Baal," Baal being the Sun-god. She was therefore one of the "fire worshippers" so beautifully described by Moore in his *Lalla Rookh*. Baal was the God who gave his sanction to everything that was wicked and vile. When a religion teaches immorality, there is no depth of depravity to which men and women will not go. The Temple of Venus in Pompei was such a scene of revolting indulgence, that the relics of the spot, exhumed after nearly eighteen hundred years of concealment, have to be kept in a reserved gallery in Naples, to which no lady can be admitted. Such a temple doubtless was one frequented by the woman who had won the affection of Ahab, King of Israel. He could not withstand her beauty, and her blandish-

ments, for far stronger men than he have fallen before such a power. Cæsar and Antony, after conquering almost the whole world, were conquered by the fair Cleopatra. The man that can resist the wiles of a beautiful but wicked woman must possess true heroism.

“ Let conquerors boast
Their fields of fame. He who in virtue arms
A young, warm spirit, against beauty’s charms,
Who feels her brightness, yet defies her thrall,
Is the best, bravest conqueror of them all.”

Her character, thus depraved, led to the commission of *great crimes*. Her wicked heart was the prolific fountain from which flowed the polluted streams of a life almost unparalleled in infamy. The religion of Ahab did not suit her. It was too unsocial and restrictive. She felt that she could not live in a country where the ten commandments were held up as a rule of practice. So she formed the deliberate purpose of revolutionizing the faith of Israel, substituting for the worship of the true God that of Baal. Her first effort after marriage, in which she was entirely successful, was to get the permission of her husband to bring her idols into the Holy Land. When she reached the country, the golden calves were the only idols to be seen, and they were symbolic of Jehovah, but now upon almost every hill-top arose, as if by magic, the images of her favorite god. The next thing she tried, in which she was equally successful, was to win her husband over to idolatry, and he, the anointed of God, built a magnificent ivory temple at Samaria, and erected on it a colossal statue of the Sun-god.

Inasmuch as the priests of Jehovah stood in the way of influencing the people in favor of her idol-worship, she had all of them put to death, with the exception of one hundred secretly hid away by Obediah, a good man, the governor of the King's household, and they were perhaps afterwards destroyed, as no further mention is made of them. When men of the world wish to oppose religion, the first thing they do is to attack its ministers. This terrible work went on till the purposes of this wicked woman were entirely accomplished, for out of the numerous hosts of Israel only seven thousand were found who did not bend the knee to Baal. But it may be asked, Was there no human, no Divine remonstrance during all this time to the career of Ahab and Jezebel? I reply, Yes, but this remonstrance was the occasion of still other crimes. The Lord God raised up Elijah as his avenging messenger, a man who, like Melchisidec, seemed to have come suddenly upon the scene, without father and without mother; who, like John the Baptist, was austere and solitary, and rugged in his character, resembling the angular country in which he appeared, and who, unlike any other character before or since, exhibited an eloquence and grandeur that not only caused Ahab to tremble on his throne, and false priests to forsake their falling shrines, but which secured him the position of the first orator of his age and one of the greatest of all time. Yet this wonderful man did not shake the fell purpose of Jezebel. He first sought to convince Ahab of the wickedness of his course by the presence of famine at a time when the mountains were

dropping their fatness, and the valleys were yielding their increase. He prayed that it might not rain for the space of three years and six months, and the heavens became brass, the earth parched, while gaunt famines stalked abroad in the land. Instead of turning from their sins, the whole blame of their sufferings was thrown on Elijah, so that he had to flee from their presence. Still Jezebel's work went on. Coming out from his hiding place again, Elijah challenged Ahab to a test as to which was the true God, Baal or Jehovah. He proposed that he who constituted the sole prophet of the Lord should meet the 850 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and that each side should slay a bullock, place it on the altar, and call on their god to consume the offering with fire from heaven, and that whichever succeeded should be acknowledged as the worshippers of the true God. The offer was accepted. The 450 priests of Baal (the 400 who attended Jezebel's groves were not there) gathered at Carmel, Elijah appeared clothed with his wonderful mantle and staff in hand. The priests of Baal were given the first trial, and utterly failed. They cried and cut themselves till their blood mingled with that of the sacrifice, yet no fire came, Elijah all the time shouting to them sarcastically, "Call louder!" Then Elijah built an altar of twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel, placed on it the wood, and then the bullock, and dug a trench all around which was filled with water, and then soaked the bullock and wood with water. Getting upon his knees, he lifted his voice to heaven and prayed, when lo! a shaft

of fire came down and consumed the bullock and the wood, and the very stones. All then said "The Lord he is God, The Lord He is God." Ahab was convinced, and caused at the request of Elijah the 450 false priests to be slain on the brook Kishon. Elijah and Ahab then approached Jezebel to tell her of the miraculous confirmation of Israel, but they found her in a rage at the death of her ministers, and more determined than ever to bind Israel to the worship of Baal. She immediately issued the death warrant of Elijah, the faithful man of God, who was compelled to fly for his life to a distant country. Sitting down under a juniper tree he became utterly despondent, and prayed God to take away his life; while Jezebel continued her reign of terror, with Ahab a willing accomplice to her nefarious schemes.

About this time she was guilty of another atrocity which better than anything else shows her true character. Ahab conceived the idea of improving his grounds, and of having among other things a "garden of herbs." A pious Israelite by the name of Naboth had a vineyard which stood in his way. He therefore sent for Naboth and told him that he would either purchase his vineyard for money, or give him another. Naboth replied that he could not sell it, as it had been inherited from his father, and by the law of Moses it was to be handed down to his children. Ahab became first enraged, and then sullen, lying down with his face against the wall, and like a spoiled child refusing to eat. Jezebel then came and told him to trouble himself no more; that she would secure the vineyard for

him. She at once ordered by letter, stamped with the royal seal, a public fast, and an assembly of the people at Jezreel, which she said was to try Naboth for blasphemies against God and the King. Naboth was arrested, tried, and condemned on the testimony of false witnesses, and stoned to death, while Ahab took possession of the much-coveted vineyard. How unlike was the conduct of this wicked king of Israel to that of Frederick the Great on a similar occasion. When the latter was improving his magnificent grounds at Sans Souci, just below the orangery, one of the finest places in the world, there stood an old mill belonging to an humble citizen. Frederick sent for the man and told him he wanted the mill, and would have it, but that he would pay him well for it. The man replied:—"You are Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia, and you have conquered nations, but you have not power or money enough to purchase or take this mill." Whereupon Frederick complimented him for his candor, and told him to keep his mill as a memento of the rights of a German citizen. When I was at Potsdam a few years ago, I noticed the old historic mill standing like a sentinel of the past amid the splendors of one of the most picturesque scenes on earth. But a King of Israel, in order to increase his pleasure grounds, deliberately took possession of the property of a true citizen, though it had to be secured by the abuse of royal power, and the murder of an innocent man, whose blood cried aloud to heaven for vengeance. His blood did not cry out in vain. The cup of the iniquity of these Amorites was now full.

God called Elijah again from his retirement, this time to pronounce the fearful doom that awaited the guilty pair, and all their "seed royal." When Ahab was walking in the vineyard, viewing his new but ill-gotten possessions, Elijah, to his great consternation, suddenly appeared on the scene. Turning to the prophet, he said, "Hast thou found me, oh my enemy?" and he said "I have found thee." He then told him his fate: "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Concerning Jezebel, he said: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." He told him that his posterity should be taken away, and his house made like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. How faithfully those prophesies were fulfilled will now be seen. In a short time a war broke out between the people of Israel and the Syrians. Ahab, while riding in the midst of the fight, received his death wound, from which his blood flowed freely into his chariot; his dead body being removed, and the chariot taken to the spring which ran through Naboth's vineyard, the dogs came and licked the bloody water up, so that the first prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. Elijah had now been taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, but his mantle having fallen on the noble Elisha, that prophet sent and had Jehu anointed King of Israel, with instructions to wreak vengeance upon the house of Ahab. Proceeding with his army to Jezreel, he was met by Joram, the new King, whom he slew with a dart thrown by his own hand, on the very spot where Naboth's vineyard was located. Marching to the

palace, Jezebel appeared at an open window, and sought first to intimidate him, and failing in that to fascinate him with her painted face and braided hair, but all in vain. Seeing two or three chamberlains standing by her side he commanded them to throw her out, which they did, and as she fell headlong, her body crushing against projecting timbers stained wall and earth with her blood, and on reaching the ground was trampled under foot by the horses. Jehu having retired to take some refreshment, bethought himself that she was a King's daughter, and was entitled to burial, but on searching for her body it was discovered that the dogs had come and eaten her up, so that there was nothing left but the skull, feet, and the palms of her hands. Such was the end of Jezebel. She sinned grievously, and grievously did she answer it. In quick succession the other members of the family were cut off, including Athaliah, the wicked and bloody daughter of Jezebel, who had played the same part in Judah's history that her mother had in Israel's. Jehu then ordered all the images removed and destroyed, and had the great statue of Baal broken in pieces and his house razed to the earth. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel."

The lessons to be drawn from this history are of the most momentous character. In my lecture on Abigail the pious wife of a brutal husband, I took occasion to give hints to ladies contemplating marriage. In this lecture the proper course is to give hints to gentlemen on the same subject.

1st. Never marry for beauty. Isaiah never uttered

a more profound truth than when he said, "Beauty is a fading flower." Beauty is by no means to be objected to, but it must be associated with those jewels of the heart which will remain to bless us after the casket has been defaced and injured. Besides, we learn from the painted face, and tired, perhaps blondined hair of Jezebel, that not everything that seems to be beautiful is real. Many a woman who passes for beautiful in this life has no greater claim to the distinction than the wax figure which is attired in silks and adorns the show window of the milliner, and he who secures one of these for a wife must content himself with having a skeleton in his closet the balance of his days.

Secondly, never marry a wicked woman. While a pure, good woman is the greatest blessing ever bestowed upon man, properly styled by Milton "heaven's last, best gift," and by Scott as man's "ministering angel," yet hell never opened its ponderous jaws and cast forth a more tormenting demon than a truly wicked woman. She is capable of a refinement in depravity to which the meanest man that ever lived could never attain.

Again, never marry a woman who is greatly your superior in intellect, unless you have made up your mind that you will be ruled by her, it may be to your temporal and eternal undoing; and where a woman rules, the order of nature is inverted. The wife is physically the weaker vessel, and designed to be mentally so as compared with her husband, for the Bible declares that "The husband is the head of the wife."

The great trouble with the unfortunate couple we have now reviewed was that Ahab was a weak character, while Jezebel was a strong one; and the weak yielded to the strong.

Never marry a woman who is opposed to your religion. This remark is not intended to apply to intermarriages in what are called the orthodox denominations, although great difficulties are liable to arise here. But I refer to the marriages where one party believes the religion of the other to be heretical, superstitious and soul destroying. Religion has a strong hold on the heart. Man is a religious animal, and when the partner of his bosom wounds him in the most sensitive part of his nature, but little happiness can be expected, and if the man be at all weak, the wife will in most cases make shipwreck of his faith and conscience. That Ahab should take a wife from a heathen land was a reproach to him and all Israel, and resulted as might have been reasonably expected.

Never for a moment think that the influence of a wife can be used as an excuse for sins committed when the Great Day of Judgment shall come. I am well aware that men are often influenced in this way even to neglect religion, or to profess a religion in which they do not believe. But it also must be remembered that Jesus Christ has said, "If any man come to me and hate not (*i. e.* loves less) his wife and children, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple, for whose loveth wife or children more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Lastly, the lesson for all is that sin never fails to

bring its punishment. "Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The wages of sin is death." We shudder as we think of the death scene of the wicked Queen. Rudely taken by the hands of strong men, thrown out of the window, her body as it went whirling to the earth being torn and mangled, there to be trodden under foot by horses, and then consumed by dogs. What could be more terrible ! But there is something worse. Her body stopped there, but her soul doubtless went on. She was a child of Belial, a daughter of the devil, and was not her fall something like that of her Infernal, concerning whom Milton says, "Him the Almighty Father hurled headlong flaming with hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition, there to dwell in adamantine chains and penal fires, who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms ?" Such a doom awaits all those who trample on the laws of God, and will not accept of Jesus Christ, who is to be the Celestial Jehu, who shall ride to the judgment in his chariot of fire, surrounded by his host of destroying angels. "To you who are troubled," says the Apostle, "rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven with his holy angels, taking vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."



THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM.

LECTURE XV.
THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM,
THE HOSPITABLE MATRON.

SITUATED five miles from Mount Tabor, down whose sides the hosts of Debora and Barak swept when “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,” was the insignificant town of Shunem, but destined to be widely known and greatly celebrated in history. One single battle can give a distinction to a place which bricks and mortar, paved streets, and a great population can never secure. Cannæ, Thermopylæ, Austerlitz, Waterloo, and Gettysburg, were small, insignificant and obscure until great and decisive battles made them household words the world over. It was so with Shunem. In addition to the great battle fought on the plains of Esdrælon, in which the prophetess Judge of Israel was the most conspicuous figure, it was here that the Philistines encamped on that ever-memorable night when Saul, with his hosts stationed on Mount Gilboa immediately opposite, went to consult the Witch of Endor; the next day marking the last engagement of the giant King, and the overthrow of Israel.

But Shunem was remarkable for other things. It was here that David secured his last wife, Abishag, who,

perhaps, he had caught a glimpse of as a bright and charming maiden when he was a refugee from the wrath of Saul. But more important still, it was here that lived the Shunamite, a great and rich woman, who was the patron and friend of the prophet Elisha, the man on whom the mantle of Elijah fell, and who was quite his equal though the two characters were very different. Elijah was austere, rugged, and grand like some mountain summit, such as the Matterhorn or Mount Blanc, or as Goldsmith expresses it :

“Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swell from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
While round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

Elisha, on the other hand, may be compared to a lovely valley, such as Chamounix, beautiful and picturesque, but restful and soothing, there being nothing in his character that was startling, while at the same time it was full of blessing to all who came within its influence. Like his Master who was to come, “he went about doing good,” and his wonderful miracles were always miracles of mercy. The woman of Shunem, appreciating his worth and having abundant means to assist him, extended to the man of God a generous hospitality. Seeing that he continually passed her house in his visits to and from the school of the prophets, located on Mount Carmel, she said to her husband, “Behold now I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make, I pray thee, a little chamber on the wall; and

let us set for him there a bed, and a table and a stool, and a candlestick, and it shall be when he cometh to us that he shall turn in thither."

Her husband readily consented, and thus was constructed the first "prophet's chamber" or preacher's room, known in the world, and which has been imitated by so many pious people since that day.

Elisha accepted the invitation, and doubtless spent many happy moments with that godly pair. But he was unwilling to accept the kindness without making a return. He therefore sent for the woman and asked if he could not further her interests, by securing a position for her husband at the court, or in the army, as he had great influence both with the King and the Captain of the host.

She gracefully and humbly declined his offer, saying, with great tenderness and delicacy, that she preferred her home. "I dwell," she said, "with mine own people." When she retired, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, suggested that as she was childless she would perhaps rejoice in becoming a mother. The suggestion striking him favorably he sent for the woman again, and told her that he had asked God to give her a son, and a favorable response had been received, whereupon the woman, rejoicing at the thought, expressed her doubts very naturally at the prospect.

In due time, however, she was made happy in the possession of a bright and beautiful child.

Children are a great blessing, and constitute the strongest and most endearing links that combine husbands and wives to each other. "Children of youth

are like arrows in the hand of the mighty, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." Children cause us many annoyances and anxieties, but who of us would be without them? The sound of their merry voices and the pattering of their feet are music to us. I heard a gentleman say not long since who had been absent from home for a month, that he would "give a dollar to hear one of his little children cry."

Doubtless there was great joy in the house at Shunem when the baby came. But alas, alas, how uncertain are human hopes! When the little fellow had attained several years, and was able to go out by himself, he went to the field one day when his father was engaged in reaping, and there under the blazing sun of that hot climate was stricken (it is supposed) with sunstroke, for placing his hands to his burning brow he could only exclaim, "My head! my head!"

When we think of the many diseases incident to childhood, is it not strange that any of them should be reared? The boy was taken to his mother and remained in her lap, the recipient of all the care she could bestow. Think you not that he was dearer than ever to her as his heart-beats were growing fewer with each expiring moment? The fact that death has marked him for his own invests the little form with a new and sacred interest, and that bleeding mother's heart could say:

"I thought him lovely when he came,
But he is saintly holy now;
Around his pure angelic brow
I see a slender ring of flame."

The struggle is at last over, and the fond mother holds in her arms the pulseless form of him who was dearer to her than life. She thinks now only of God, and the man of God, through whose instrumentality the blessing had been given; and hope springs up in her afflicted bosom as she trusts that the same intercession which secured the treasure might restore it now that it was lost. Taking the corpse and placing it in the "prophet's chamber," she went at once to Carmel to see the prophet. Recognizing her in the distance, and supposing that some calamity had befallen her, he sent his servant to meet her, and to say, "Is it well with thee, is it well with thy husband, is it well with the child?" And she answered, "It is well." O that every mother could thus believe in regard to their lost loved ones, for it certainly is well with them. There is no question as to the salvation of infants. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus, and the same truth was reiterated again and again.

Elisha requested his servant to see what effect placing his staff upon the child would have, but the woman would not return without the prophet. On their way they met Gehazi, who acknowledged his failure, and when Elisha entered his room he locked the door, and was alone with the dead. Soon stretching himself upon the little body it began to revive, and at last the child was entirely restored, and given to his mother.

"The man of God came forth and led the child
Unto his mother, and went on his way.
And he was there—her beautiful—her own—
Living and smiling on her—with his arms

Folded about her neck, and his warm breath
Breathing upon her lips, and in her ear
The music of his gentle voice once more."

Mothers, it may be that your dead boys have not been given back to you, but are still "folded close under deepening snow." No prophet has been sent to call the little ones to life and light again. Be not discouraged. So sure as God's word is true, "the time shall come when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth." The little body that you sowed in weakness shall be raised in strength; the child that was placed away in corruption shall be raised in incorruption; the little one that was buried a temporal body shall be raised a spiritual body, made like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ! I have a lovely little boy, my first born, buried in the cemetery at Lynchburg, Virginia, but I believe that at the last great day he will just as certainly be placed in my arms by the Great Prophet as was the child of the Shunamite woman restored to her by Elisha.

A child of Rev. W. J. Hoge, D.D., of Virginia, was lying dangerously ill. Turning its eyes upon the father, who sat tearfully watching its sufferings, the child, just three years old, said, "Father, lift me higher." He raised the little one in bed, elevating the pillow. "Higher yet, father," the little voice cried. He then took the child in his arms, and held him up. "Still higher, father," was again heard; and now the father lifted the little form as high as he was able above his head, when "Good bye, father," was faintly heard, and

on lowering the precious burden he discovered that the light had gone from the eyes, and the little one was dead; the tired spirit had winged its flight to that “higher” sphere where “sickness, sorrow, pain, and death are felt and feared no more.” The good father has since gone to his reward; the spirits of parent and child have met in celestial embrace; and the time will come when with bodies reunited they will both go on from height to height of heavenly bliss, the refrain of each triumphal song ever being “Higher yet, higher yet.”

Elisha continued to visit the good woman and her husband, enjoying their hospitality, while the happy boy doubtless often “climbed his knee the envied kiss to share.”

At last a famine occurring in the country, he advised her to emigrate to the land of the Philistines, which she did and remained seven years. On her return she found that her property had all been confiscated, and she was thrown into great distress. Elisha was not there now to advise her, so she concluded that she would go of her own accord to the king, and see if she could not have her property restored to her. This she did, accompanied by her son, and on coming in sight of the ruler whom should she see conversing with him but Gehazi, the faithful servant of Elisha; and strange to say he was talking with him about the Shunamite at the time, of the great service she had rendered Elisha, and of the wonderful miracle he had performed on her son.

“There is that Shunamite now,” said Gehazi, “and

the little boy that the prophet brought to life." Whereupon the woman made known her complaint, and the king at once ordered that her property should all be given back to her. This subject, which I have styled "the Hospitable Matron," gives me a good foundation on which to offer some general remarks on the nature, duty, and rewards of hospitality.

1. What is hospitality? Worcester defines it as "the practice of entertaining strangers gratuitously—kindness to strangers." It is susceptible of a wider definition. We can learn what it is from the original word, from which the term is derived. It is derived from *hospes*, which means a guest, and also a host, one who entertains a guest. From this word names have been derived which describe institutions totally at variance with the original idea, such as hospital, which is used in the double sense for an alms-house, and an asylum for the sick; and hotel, a place where strangers are entertained, but not, indeed, gratuitously. A man who comes to a city on a visit to friends and is forced to pay his way at a hotel is not apt to think that he met with great hospitality, though that word and hotel have a common origin. Giving free entertainment to those whose presence we can not avoid, can not be styled hospitality. There are a great many sponges and dead-beats in society who thrust themselves upon us when we do not want them, and we, accomniodating them grudgingly, claim the credit of acting hospitably.

A minister relates that having gone a long journey to preach for a congregation upon their invitation, at

the close of the services no one asked him home to dinner. Feeling very hungry after his exhausting labors, he watched with pain the retiring brethren, till at last he approached one of the most opulent and said:

“ My brother, will you go home with me to dinner to-day ? ”

“ How far do you live ? ” said he.

“ Only twenty miles,” was the reply.

“ Suppose you go home with me,” said the member, “ I live only half a mile from the church.”

“ I will do so most cheerfully,” said the preacher, but with his opinion of the hospitality of that congregation not in the slightest degree enhanced.

Neither is a mere exchange in the way of entertainment to be confounded with genuine hospitality, as when one person offers to spend a given time with a friend, on the condition that that friend will spend the same time with him. Entertainment is money, just as gold is money, for it costs gold, and while exchange is no robbery, and while it may be proper, pleasant and hospitable to make such a contract, it is not, strictly speaking, hospitality. Nothing can be classed as hospitality which has a selfish or sordid end in view. Men very often use their home as hunters their decoys, for the purpose of entrapping unwary birds into their nets. The merchant wines and dines his customer that he may sell him a bill of goods; the lawyer his client that he may increase his fee; and the physician sometimes entertains his patient that in addition to his medical charge he may have pay for food also. Hospitality to be genuine must be kind, cordial, disin-

terested, gratuitous, as in the case of the Shunamite; and in this view of the subject there is no quality that more highly adorns man.

2. Such hospitality is a duty enjoined us by both reason and revelation. Our very human nature speaks to us on this subject. The stranger who knocks at our door in need of food and shelter is our brother, and it is impossible that he should suffer without touching a responsive chord in our hearts.

It is said that of two æolian harps placed together and attuned exactly in unison, that one cannot be touched without the other, though unswept by mortal minstrelsy, giving forth soft and plaintive murmurs. And of two human beings, "bone of one bone, and flesh of one flesh," brought face to face, one cannot be in want without meeting in the other a corresponding disposition to supply it. Hence, hospitality has existed in all ages and countries of the world. As far as the records of time go back, they tell of the "guest chamber" in the ancient, though humble house, corresponding to the "company bedroom" of the present day and the "prophet's chamber" of the Shunamite. The origin of the word hospitality is hid in remote antiquity. The hospitality of Greece was celebrated. It was made a matter of religion. Strangers and travelers were regarded as under the protection of Zeus, the Grecian Jupiter. They were cordially received and protected free of charge, under the apprehension that a violation of the duty of hospitality would provoke the wrath of the gods. The roads were all sacred, and he who passed over them was regarded

as the guest of the land. Along their courses were statues of the tutelary deity of the road, with offerings of food, of which he could partake at pleasure. Whenever he came to a house he was at perfect liberty to put up for the day or night, when he left he was presented with gifts, and departed with "the God speed thee" and other benedictions of the host. The tenderest ties subsisted between the host and guest ever afterward. In Rome there was a tie recognized by law between them, almost as strong as that which bound patron and client together. Leaving the polished nations of antiquity and descending to the rude and uncivilized, we find that hospitality has always been their most distinguishing characteristic. In Arabia the Sheiks have always been noted for the kindness shown to strangers who came within their encampments, and Mungo Park, the celebrated African explorer, gives a touching account of hospitality shown him by a poor negress in the wilds of Central Africa, who gave him boiled fish for supper and a mat to sleep on and then calling her maidens sang him to sleep with a strain of affecting simplicity of which the following are the words: "The winds roared and the rains fell; the poor white man faint and weary, came and sat under our tree. He has no mother to bring him milk, no wife to give him corn." Chorus:

"Let us pity the poor white man,
No mother no wife has he,
No loved one near to comfort him,
No child to climb his knee."

This duty thus commended to us by the heathen is

especially enjoined upon us by the precepts and examples of the word of God. In the law compassion to strangers is certainly enforced by the words, "For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," and in the decalogue special mention is made of "The stranger that is within thy gates." As may be supposed in the New Testament, which is the Gospel of love, the subject is again and again referred to in the following terms. "Be given to hospitality," "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging," "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." While we have many precepts there is no end to the beautiful examples of hospitality furnished in the Bible. I can only mention a few of them, notably, Abraham's entertainment of the angels, when he brought water to wash their feet, three measures of meal to make them bread, a calf "tender and good," dressed and cooked, butter and milk, saying, "If I have found grace in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant," and he stood by them under the tree and they did eat." Next, the entertainment of two angels by Lot in Sodom, who washed their feet and gave them a feast of unleavened bread. Witness the solemn appeal of Job in the hour of his great affliction. "If I have withheld the poor from their desire or have caused the eyes of the widow to fall; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering, if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm

be broken from the bone!" And then the hospitable old man named in the book of Judges, who meeting a wayfaring man in the street whom no one would receive, said, "Peace be with thee, let all thy wants be upon me, only lodge not in the street." So he brought him into his house and gave provender unto the asses, and they washed their feet and did eat and drink. David was one of the most hospitable of men. After his burnt offerings he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. "And he dealt among the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine." Obediah and Nehemiah are other notable cases. But most conspicuous of all was perhaps the hospitality of the Shunamite to Elisha, already described.

The hospitality shown our Lord was the tenderest and the sweetest. As a general thing he received no kindness at the hands of men. He came to his own and his own received him not. As imagination wanders to the scenes of his earthly pilgrimage he is pictured to us as a care-worn, homeless wanderer, scorched by the sun or chilled by the blast, saying, while men hid their faces from Him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." But thank God there were two or three notable exceptions. How grateful was the Son of God for the kindness shown Him on that ever-memorable occasion when He said, "Simon, seest thou this woman: I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she

hath washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head: thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet." On another occasion, as the Master and those who were with him approached a village, "He made as though he would have gone further, but they constrained Him saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them." Blessed invitation, illustrious guest, happy family!

But if you were to ask me to point to the most hospitable home in the whole world, at the time that Jesus lived, I would say it was situated about two and a half miles from Jerusalem, in the little village of Bethany, the property of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Mary, who is represented on one occasion as sitting at His feet hearing His word, and at another as anointing Him for His burial; Martha, who was "cumbered with much serving," that her Lord might be supplied; and Lazarus, at least one young man of that day, who in the midst of a wicked and sinful generation, was not afraid nor ashamed to manifest his love for his Saviour, and to tender Him the shelter of his humble home.

The hospitality of the early Christians was of the most generous and cheerful kind. Luke tells us that "they that believed had all things common, and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." The kindness shown by Aquila and Priscilla to Apollas, "eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures," in taking

Him to their own home, is also mentioned as a praiseworthy hospitality. When Lydia was converted under the preaching of Paul, as soon as she was baptized she said to him, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord come into my house and abide there," and she "constrained" him to do so. Lastly, what should have a powerful influence in enforcing this duty upon us is the divine hospitality. In this view of the subject the universe is but a vast dwelling, our Father's house, the earth teems with good things for His children, the ocean is God's fish pond; fruitful valleys are His kitchen gardens, continents are his grain and pasture fields; illimitable forests are filled with game for man's food, while springs and rivers supply Him with water. God is good to all, opening His hands and supplying the wants of every living thing; and having sheltered and fed us here for a sufficient season, has provided a means through our Lord Jesus Christ —a ladder reaching from earth to heaven—to take us home to dwell with Him forever. Surely such considerations as these, drawn from nature and the Bible, should induce us all to be "given to hospitality" Hence, good men, men who love God and revere the Bible, have ever been distinguished for a generous hospitality, illustrating the picture of the village preacher, so beautifully drawn by Oliver Goldsmith:

" His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings but relieved their pain.
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;

The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by the fire and talked the night away—
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done.
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan
His pity gave ere charity began."

3. Consider, in the last place, the rewards of hospitality. While it is in its nature gratuitous, and must be discharged without any reference to compensation, there is no virtue which brings a richer reward. Indeed, it brings its own reward. The pleasure derived from conferring benefits cannot be overestimated, for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He is an unworthy host who is not refreshed by the consoling discourse and grateful appreciation of his humblest guest, while many of them leave with us recollections that ever remain as green spots in our memories. Said Shelley, with true hospitality to his friend:

"You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honor you."

Among the sweetest recollections of my life are those connected with the guests entertained by my father in his Virginia home. The penniless wanderer, the traveling preacher, the electioneering politician, the sick and wounded soldier, alike found cordial entertainment beneath his roof, and seated with them before the "blazing hearth," and listening to their stories of travel and adventure, I derived lessons which have been of service to me in all after life. If you

would ask me to-day what is the glory and crown of my native State, I would answer, not so much her maternity of States and statesmen as the example which she gave to the world of a glorious, whole-souled, old-fashioned "Old Virginia hospitality." Of that hospitality she has never boasted, for she has felt that it brought its own reward in the loving hearts and grateful benedictions of the recipients. While it may be very easy for you to see how congenial friends, our equals in society, can reward us, the truth may not so readily appear when we consider the indigent poor; and yet this is the class our Saviour informs us which brings the highest reward. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee; but when thou maketh a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Many of these humble guests develop into splendid characters, worthy to occupy the palaces of kings or the halls of the great. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," said our Lord, "for many have thereby entertained angels unawares." Alexander H. Stephens was entertained when an orphan boy by a good and wealthy woman. In after years when reduced to penury and turned out of her home by a heartless wretch who had mortgages on her property, Mr. Stephens, then developed into a matchless lawyer, won back the property, and reinstated her in her home,

making no charge whatever, solely because she had given him food and shelter on that luckless night.

A beautiful incident is thus related of the Emperor Ivan, who reigned over Russia in the middle of the sixteenth century. It was his custom to wander in disguise occasionally to the homes of his subjects in the vicinity, and see their modes of living and make a personal test of their virtues. On this occasion, clothed in rags like a beggar, he strayed into a village not many miles from Moscow and sought entertainment at several dwellings, saying that he was faint with hunger and weary with travel. No one received him. At length, as he was about to retire in disgust, he discovered what seemed to be the poorest cottage in the place, and knocked at the door. A peasant made his appearance. "Can I stay all night?" said the emperor; "I am faint and weary." "Alas! my friend," said the peasant, "you have come to a poor place. My wife is sick and groans so that you cannot sleep, and every room is crowded, but come in, you shall at least be fed and sheltered from the cold. Such as I have give I unto thee." The emperor was then conducted to a small apartment where he discovered five children. Two infants were asleep in bed, a little girl of four years was asleep on a mat, and two others, aged six and eight, were on their knees praying for their mother, whose piteous groans could be all the time heard. The peasant told him to be seated till he could get him something to eat. He soon returned with bread, honey and eggs, and told him to satisfy himself while he went to look after his sick wife. A

bed was provided, but he spent that night meditating on the virtues of that poor but happy family. The wife recovering in the morning, the stranger said: "You have a young infant that I wish to see christened. I have a benevolent friend in Moscow who will stand as godfather for him. I shall be back in three hours." The peasant having consented, waited three hours, but no one came. At last he discovered a great and imposing cavalcade coming from the direction of Moscow. He recognized the Imperial guards, and called his family out to witness the Emperor as he passed by. When the procession came in front of his humble dwelling, a circle was formed, and through a living lane the splendid carriage of the Emperor was driven up containing that august personage. "I told you," said he, "that I would provide a godfather for your child, and I have come to take him to the church. I will be his godfather." The man was overpowered. As soon as he recovered himself, he brought the child to the Emperor, and he was taken to the church and christened. Delivering the child then to his father, the Emperor said: "The highest duty of an Emperor is to reward virtue. I will not break up your household, but will give you a new and elegant home, with extensive grounds, and ample resources with which to dispose your true and genuine hospitality. As soon as your child is old enough, bring him to me and he shall be educated in the palace, and receive ever-increasing preferment at my hands." Thus did the Emperor of all the Russias reward a simple act of hospitality.

But one mightier than the Czar of Russia acts in a way somewhat similar. Leaving, so to speak, the court of heaven, he visits in the garb, or person, of a weary traveller or beggar, the homes of his people. On a cold wintry night it may be, while the winds are whistling without and the fires are crackling within, a beggar clothed in rags, and faint with hunger, stands at your door. Be careful how you reject him, or you may reject the King of heaven, the Emperor of the universe, one of whose recorded salutations is, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open unto me I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." And does he reward you for such entertainment? Yes, we are told that at the last great day hospitality will be the rule by which the judgment itself will be conducted. The King upon his throne shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; for inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

But of all the forms of hospitality, that which is most acceptable to heaven, and which brings the richest reward, is, perhaps, hospitality like that of the Shunamite, shown to ministers of God, for they, receiving material things, minister to their benefactors in spiritual things, and often as in the case of Elisha minister in temporal things as well. These men are God's messengers. Their lives are devoted to the good of others, and they are generally poor men,

with but little of this world's goods. It seems to have been ordered from the first that ministers should be dependent on others. When Christ sent forth not only his apostles but the disciples also he instructed them to provide neither gold nor silver nor brass, to carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes nor two coats. But they were not sent as sponges on society, for He told them that the workman was worthy of his meat, the laborer of his hire. They were told to apply at the houses of the worthy for entertainment, and if they were received they were to speak peace to that house, but if they were refused to shake off the dust of their feet against that house or that city, saying it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. While it is to be hoped that none were refused, how greatly were all those that received these men of God rewarded. While ministers of the present day cannot work miracles, cannot heal the sick, cast out devils, restore the blind or raise the dead, as Jesus did for His host at Bethany, and Elisha did for his host at Shunem, and the apostles did on so many occasions, yet they can do much—they can instruct their hosts and hostesses in the way of the Lord; hold up before them a godly example, and invoke the peace of God upon their dwellings.



ESTHER.

LECTURE XVI.

ESTHER,

THE ISRAELITISH QUEEN OF A HEATHEN KING.

ESTHER has won a place on the scroll of fame to which I think she is hardly entitled. As she was the last of the notable women of the Old Testament, so multitudes regard her as the greatest. A great writer says she is “the most attractive character found in the annals of history,” and still another says: “In the splendid galaxy of Hebrew women of the olden time, no name stands more prominent or shines with a richer lustre.” Esther means “star,” and her very name has been blazed afar by her admiring eulogists, not only as in the sentence just quoted, but in a thousand other “sky-scraping” figures. Says one: “What in all nature is so full of lustrous, permanent, steady beauty as a star, beaming forth out of its home of everlasting blue—sometimes upon unbroken masses of storm clouds—oftener through their wild rifts, and oftener still silvering the black masses of night, guiding the traveller in his solitary way, or directing the billow-tossed mariner to his desired haven? We speak of the star of hope, the star of joy, the star of superiority. All this Esther was to her people.”

It is my duty to disenchant you of some of the

golden fancies you have had about this renowned character in sacred history, at the same time not ignoring those virtues that made her name famous.

1. She was not as devoted to her country as she might have been. When the Jews were taken captive to Babylon, that which distinguished them above everything else was the bitterness with which they bore their exile, and their longing desire to get back to their own land. They could not smile, they could not sing in that heathen land; they only wept: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, yea we wept: when we remembered Zion; we hanged our harps upon the willow in the midst thereof, for then they that carried us away captive required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And no sooner had Cyrus broken the power of their foes, and set them free, than the most consistent of them hastened to their long-deserted home. Among those who did not go was Esther, who with Mordecai, her cousin, preferred to accompany the conquering hosts of the great general to Persia.

2. In the next place she married a heathen. All along in these lectures I have condemned those eminent Israelites who went outside of their religion to secure wives, such as Samson taking Delilah from the Philistines; Solomon taking the daughter of Pharoah, and Ahab the daughter of Ethbaal, a Sidonian king;

but here we behold the fair Esther marrying Ahasuerus, a heathen king. It was bad enough for an Israelitish maiden to marry such a man had he been a paragon of moral excellence, but he was just the reverse—a heartless, drunken wretch. It will not do to say that he forced her to marry him. She was a candidate for the position, and appeared with the contesting damsels of the land at his court, or harem, for no other purpose than to become his wife, if the choice should fall to her lot.

Picture to yourselves this girl, standing before the libertine, in whose eye she

“——well might read

Dark tales of many a ruthless deed,
The ruined maid, the shrine profaned,
Oaths broken, and the threshold stained
With blood of guests—there written all
Black as the damning drops that fall
From the denouncing angel’s pen,
Ere mercy wipes them out again.”

Yet there she stood courting his decision, and coveting a place at his side.

Besides, whose place was she seeking to fill, whose shoes was she seeking to wear? Those of the noble Vashti, who, because of her regard for her womanly virtue; who, because she refused to expose herself to a crowd of drunken bacchanalians, at the king’s behest, was cruelly divorced and banished an outcast in the world. I do not hesitate to say that way down in the hearts of the lovers of virtue the name of Vashti will remain when that of Esther shall have been for-

gotten forever. Lady Godiva has been immortalized by poets and painters for exposing herself for the good of others at the request of a foolish and capricious husband. Surely nobler honors should be paid to the woman who refused to expose herself at the request of a wicked husband, preferring divorce to such an unholy alliance, and death to such disgrace. But as she pined Hagar-like in the wilderness, what must she have thought of this worshipper of the true God, who was willing, in violation of all the principles of her religion, to step in and take her place?

3. Another thing worthy of remark is she never made known the fact that she was a Jewess for many years. How unlike was she in this particular even to Jezebel, the heathen queen of an Israelitish king. Jezebel talked and acted her idolatrous religion all the time, and used her influence in its behalf until nearly all Israel, including the king, were converted to idolatry. But Esther enjoyed the luxuries of the Persian throne and court without ever intimating, so far as we know, that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was her God.

It is true that a book embraced in the canon of Scripture has been named for Esther, but the name of God nowhere appears in that book, and no reference is made to her name anywhere among the writers of the New Testament. While not claiming for this circumstance any special importance, it is nevertheless a little singular that it should be so.

Again, Esther was of so bloodthirsty a character that many suppose her to have been the wife of Xerxes, noted for her cruel temper. Certain it is she did not

stop with taking the life of Haman, as we shall see, but hung his ten sons on the same gallows, and caused the blood of five hundred officers of the court to flow like water. The only apology that can be made for her is that she was but an instrument in the hands of Mordecai, and had to do as he dictated, but that claim would deprive her of the honor to which she is entitled for the part she played in the last great scene, and besides a true heroine would not be controlled by another to do evil, though as in the case of Vashti, the most fearful consequences might result. "A brave mind acts of itself, and never asks the body counsel," says Otway.

I suppose I have said enough to convince you that Esther was by no means faultless, and I turn with pleasure now to speak of those excellencies of her character which have rendered her name famous. She was a woman of transcendent beauty. How beautiful must she have been when she bore off the palm from all the women of the Persian empire, a country extending from India to Ethiopia, and containing one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. What a treasure she must have been, for of all beautiful things on this beautiful earth there is nothing that can equal the beauty of a truly beautiful woman. Men have tried to find things in the animate and inanimate world to which she could be compared, but all in vain. Milton says she is "beyond compare." A ship is beautiful riding majestically over the waters, with sails full-bellied and banners streaming; a tree—an orange tree—is beautiful, with its rich, evergreen foliage,

“ Whose fruit and blossom in the breeze
Are wantoning together free,
Like age at play with infancy ; ”

But what are these things to woman, as she stands before us in peerless beauty, “ grace in her step, heaven in her eye, in every gesture dignity and love ! ” Some one has said that a man cannot gaze on that matchless statue, the Apollo Belvidere, without feeling his form dilate and grow taller and nobler while the spell of high art is upon him. But I confess to you that I was much more impressed, much more elevated by a view of the Venus of Milo. This was not owing to the superiority of workmanship of the latter, but because the artist had a better subject with which to gratify my aesthetic nature. Just as the Venus of Milo is the most beautiful of all the female statues in the Louvre, so Esther, the Venus of the Old Testament, was the most beautiful of all women whose histories are recorded there.

But it was not her beauty alone that has transmitted her name to posterity, but a great deed which she did for her people while playing the role of queen. Whether righteously married or not, she rose from a position of great obscurity to be the wife of the mightiest monarch that then reigned on earth—the royal son of the mighty Cyrus, reigning over one hundred and twenty-seven states.

“ From that delightful province of the sun,
The first of Persia’s lands he shines upon.”

To the far-off isles of the west, a man whose palace

far eclipsing that of Sardanapalus and the Cæsars has left relics of fluted columns, tesselated pavements and curious architectural designs that are the delight and wonder of the world; a man upon whose simple word hung the destiny of nations. In the eyes of the world this was a distinction to which but few women on earth have attained. Joan of Arc, from a peasant girl, became the leader of armies. The maid of Saragossa, from a quiet maiden, became the glory of the Spanish army. The daughter of a washerwoman in Germany married the cavalier of a duke, and an humble actress became the wife of the duke of Meiningen, succeeding the deceased daughter of the king of Prussia, but when was there ever before or since Esther a country girl who could leap from a hovel to a throne.

She had been living amid the splendors of the Persian court five years when an event occurred which came very near costing her life, and that of her people, and at the same time destroying the religious hopes of mankind. Her cousin, Mordecai, who had been so greatly instrumental in her elevation, was the innocent cause of all the trouble. After Esther entered the palace Mordecai was appointed porter at the king's gate, the fact that he was related to Esther being still unknown to the king, but some kind word had doubtless secured the place for him. The favorite of the king was a man by the name of Haman, intellectual, rich, proud and overbearing, and a great hater of the Jews, owing to the fact, perhaps, that his great ancestor, Agag, was slain by Samuel. His hatred was

greatly intensified by Mordecai, who refused to bow to him in common with other servants as the prime minister passed in and out of the gate. In addition to all this he doubtless had that prejudice against the Jews which all nations have cherished among whom they have lived, and which is to-day illustrated in the cruel treatment of that people in Russia, many of them having again and again been robbed, mobbed and banished from the country. Haman made up his mind that he would secure from the king an edict for the slaughter of all the Jews in the empire, and as Palestine was then embraced in it, the entire race would thus be swept from the face of the earth. The petition to the king was couched in these words: "There be certain people dispersed among thy people who keep not the king's laws, but have laws diverse of their own; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. Let them be destroyed. I will pay ten thousand talents to those who have charge of the business." Of course the king consented, for the Jews were his enemies and Haman would furnish the money to get rid of them—the immense sum of \$2,000,000. Haman, jubilant, with the decree in his hand, left the palace and immediately sent the following dispatch, by messengers, to all parts of the country: "The king commands to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to take the spoil of them for a prey." With a view to gratifying his personal revenge he proceeded to erect a gallows for Mordecai in front of his own

house about seventy feet high. He was determined that if the Jew would not bow low he should at least swing high.

Weeping, lamentation and great mourning now took possession of the unhappy Jews. Mordecai, covered with sackcloth, walked up and down the streets of Shushan wailing, till his bitter cries reached the palace, when Esther sent a messenger to him with clothing, which he declined, but sent back to her the decree with the request that she should intercede with the king in their behalf. The timid girl replied that she could not for fear of losing her life, that no one dared approach the king unrequested without suffering death. Mordecai then told her she must die if she declined, as she was embraced in the decree. Summoning all her resolution she answered that she would go, saying, "Go gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast ye for me three days and nights. I also and my maidens will fast. So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish I perish." How like a woman was this, afraid of her shadow—when she is resolved, there is naught under heaven that can shake her purpose, but she is as brave as a tigress. Esther, attired in her richest robes, and looking as beautiful as some white winged angel before the celestial throne, approached the solitary king. Startled from his revery and sensitive as to any incautious advances to him, he is about to cry out for the executioners, when, lo! he beholds such a vision of beauty as never greeted mortal's eye before. He waves his golden scepter as indicative of his willingness to receive her, she touches

it and "sinks like a snow wreath at his feet." Ah! good-bye, Haman. It is not in the power of mortal man to resist a scene like that. "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?" he says, "what is thy request? It shall be granted thee even to the half of my kingdom." What a triumph? The laws of the Medes and Perisans could never be changed, but in the presence of such matchless beauty there was a law. Beauty's word was law.

Esther refused to make her request for three days, wishing to make her spell on the king as complete as possible. She simply requested that the king and Haman should dine with her the next day, and the day after, keeping the king in suspense till the last moment. In the meantime a singular incident occurred. The king, reading in the chronicles of the preservation of his life by Mordecai on a certain occasion, found that he had never rewarded him. Sending for Haman he asked: "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Haman, thinking he meant him, said: "Let him dress in the king's robes and ride the king's steed, led by the first man in the empire." The king then ordered that this honor should be paid to Mordecai, with Haman to lead the horse. That was a humiliating service for the proud favorite, but he had to do it, and as he saw the gallows he doubtless trembled at the probability of approaching doom. But the time for the last banquet arrives. The King appealed to Esther again to make known her request, when she replied: "If I have found favor in thy sight, O King,

and if it pleases thee, O king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish, but if we had been sold for bond men and bond women I had held my tongue, although the enemy cannot countervail the king's damage." Imagine the king's rage when he heard this, and imagine the situation of Haman. Each word spoken was an electric shock which threatened to shiver him to pieces. Foaming with rage, the king asked, "Who is he and where is he that presumes thus in his heart?" Esther transformed as an avenging Nemesis points her finger at the writhing wretch and exclaims: "That wicked Haman," with an effect far transcending that when Nathan said unto David "Thou art the man." It was enough. The executioners rushed in, put the fatal napkin over the face of the arch villain, and hurrying him away, hung him to the very gallows which he had constructed for Mordecai. The decree was in effect annulled, though being a Persian law it could not be revoked. The Jews were allowed to defend themselves, which put an end to the slaughter. All of Haman's family and many hundred nobles were butchered at the request of Esther. Mordecai was made prime minister of the Persian empire and Esther continued to reign the idolized queen of earth's most renowned potentate. In honor of the deliverance which she caused, the feast of Purim was established, which lasts to this day. On such occasions the book of Esther is read, and when the name of Haman is mentioned the Jews stamp their feet and exclaim: "Let

his name perish." This subject affords many instructive lessons, which, owing to the length of this discourse, can only be hinted at in conclusion.

First, it teaches that women can have ambition as well as men, and that in order to attain its objects they will sometimes sacrifice country, religion, and even modesty, which is the crown jewel of the sex. If you were to ask me why this Israelitish girl refused to return to Palestine, why she followed Cyrus to Shushan, why she was willing to marry a divorced man, and be the successor to a wife whose "virtues pleadeth trumpet-tongued against the deep damnation of her taking off"—I would answer, because of ambition! "By that sin fell the angels of heaven, and by that sin fall the angels of earth. Esther sold herself for a crown; many sell themselves for gold, and multitudes to be connected with names which they esteem to be noble. Shame on all such!"

" Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
 'Tis only noble to be good;
 Kind hearts are more than coronets,
 And simple faith than Norman blood."

We learn, secondly, that God overrules the mistakes of his creatures for his own glory and his people's good. "He maketh the wrath of men to praise him, and the remainder of wrath will he restrain."

Joseph's brethren meant evil when they sold him into slavery, but God overruled the act to the preservation of Israel from famine. Judas Iscariot wickedly betrayed the Saviour, but without the shedding of blood

there would be no remission, and the spear that pierced the Saviour's side opened a fountain for the cleansing of a lost world; so that Peter could say at the day of Pentecost: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain."

When Esther married Ahasuerus she did it to gratify her ambition, but God overruled the event to the preservation of the whole race of Israel. The emblem of Ahasuerus was a lion, as we learn from a sculptured marble exhumed. Like Samson's lion of old, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." "The staff of life, the sweetness of liberty." So truly did the hand of God appear to Mordecai that he said to Esther, "Who knows but for this cause thou didst come into the kingdom!" Verily we may exclaim:

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will."

We see how the wicked are ensnared in their own nets. Little did Haman think when he erected that gallows that he would swing on it himself. Those who seek to destroy the fortune or reputation of others would do well to take warning from him. They stand ever ready to fall into the pit which their own hands have made—to be hoist by their own petard.

God seems to have a hand in that poetic justice

which is so often visited upon individuals in this life. King Lewis of Bavaria, when at the height of his folly, employed a magnificent prima donna to sing for him at his palace. Charmed with her voice he told her he wanted to try its effect on water, and at twelve at night took her in a boat out on the lake. She sang at his earnest request till she was hoarse and could sing no more. He then leaped out of the boat and waded ashore, leaving her to suffer in the cold and at last to wade ashore herself. She took pneumonia and died in a week. In less than a year afterwards, while walking along the lake, a fit of madness came on him, and into the water he plunged and was drowned. On the spot where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth they licked the blood of his murdered persecutors, Ahab and Joram, just as on the gallows built for Mordecai Haman was made to hang.

We see here the folly of letting an insignificant thing disturb our happiness. Haman, rich and powerful, had no peace so long as he saw "the Jew Mordecai sitting in the king's gate." And there are many of us who feel miserable just because we have one enemy, or because we want a few dollars or because we have failed to secure one cherished object or because we are troubled with one slight disease. Very few of us there are who have not a Jew Mordecai somewhere to annoy our peace and destroy our slumbers. Let us be satisfied with what we have; let us learn with the apostle, "in whatever condition we may be placed therewith to be content." Says a beautiful poet:

“Contentment, rosy, dimpled maid,
Thou brightest daughter of the sky,
Why dost thou to the hut repair
And from the gilded palace fly?
I’ve seen thee on the milkmaid’s cheek,
I’ve traced thee on the peasant’s smile,
I’ve heard thee loudly laugh and speak
Amid the sons of want and toil;
But in the houses of the great
I’ve sought thee early, sought thee late,
And ne’er thy rosy steps could find,
Since then from wealth and pomp ye flee
I ask but happiness and thee.”

Let us finally learn the value of importunity in our approaches to the King of kings. It was a dangerous thing to go into the presence of Ahasuerus, but duty demanded it, and Esther went. “I will go in unto the king,” was her noble resolve, “and if I perish I perish.”

The King of heaven welcomes all who come. His golden sceptre is uplifted to greet the humblest penitent and his glorious promise is, “Ask what ye will in my name and I will do it for you.” Esther had to entreat for all her people, but heaven’s king permits all the people to entreat for themselves. O, then, come to the king to-night.

“Come, humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve,
Come with your guilt and fear oppressed
And make this last resolve.
I’ll go to Jesus, though my sins
Have like a mountain rose;

I know his courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose.
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away I know
I must forever die."

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